

Read

Genesis 18:1-10a

Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

LIVING THE WORD

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 21, 2019



REFLECTION

Have you ever taken a stress test? It can be helpful to evaluate our stress level. We can control some of our stress like prioritizing our responsibilities and checking them off our to-do lists as we accomplish things. Other elements in life we cannot control, like a parent who has an addiction or the death of a loved one. We can keep ourselves balanced by eating healthy, working out, making time for prayer, calling a friend, or going to bed earlier. At other times we need friends or family to remind us to take a break and relax. One stress test to consider is Luke's telling of the Martha and Mary story. Who are you? Martha or Mary? Mary is sitting with Jesus listening and taking in all that he is sharing. Meanwhile Martha is working herself into a tizzy doing all the serving. She wants Jesus to take her side and agree that Mary is lazy and should help. Instead Jesus points out her anxiety and encourages Martha to, instead, do what Mary was doing. Doing versus being. Which will you choose?

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How did you feel doing the mindfulness prayer?
- ❖ Who are you more like, Martha or Mary? How can you be more like Mary?



ACTION

Allow yourself between ten and twenty minutes this week to practice mindfulness and prayerful meditation. Find a comfortable way to sit with your feet flat on the floor. Take three deep breaths. Focus on letting go of worries or concerns and just breathe. After you feel more settled and aware of God's presence with you, repeat this prayer: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:11). With each repetition, take one word or phrase away starting with the last word. For example, the second time you pray you will say "Be still and know that I am"; the third time "Be still and know"; the fourth time "Be still and," etc. Once you make it down to "Be," begin adding the words again. Focus on each word as you pray them. This meditative prayer focuses on "being" rather than "doing."





July 21, 2019

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #108C

Genesis 18:1-10a

Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

A paradox is presented in today's Gospel. Jesus comes to the home of Martha and Mary, and the two sisters have vastly different responses to his presence. Martha, the hostess extraordinaire, welcomes Jesus and tends to his every need. She stays busy serving their guest, ensuring that he has a comfortable visit to their home. Mary, on the other hand, spends her time at the foot of Jesus, listening to his every word. It is a tension between action and contemplation.

Q FOCUS: *To live lives of action and contemplation—dwelling with Martha and Mary's response to Jesus.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene (July 22) and the Feast of St. James (July 25). These two saints were important disciples of Jesus during his lifetime. Mary Magdalene, known as the "Apostle of the Apostles," was a close friend of Jesus. She was among the first to witness his Resurrection in all of the Gospel accounts. James was one of the Twelve and the brother of John the Evangelist. Both of these saints were among the first to testify to the Christ.

Church Teaching Connection

"What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: 'Contemplative prayer . . . in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time . . . to be alone with him who we know loves us.'

"Contemplative prayer seeks him 'whom my soul loves.' It is Jesus, and in him, the Father. We seek him, because to desire him is always the beginning of love, and we seek him in that pure faith which causes us to . . . live in him. In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2709; citing *The Book of Her Life* (8, 5) and *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* (I, 67) as well as the Song of Songs 1:7 and 3:1-4).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 10:38-42

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply,

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

In today's Gospel reading, we witness an encounter between Jesus and two sisters, Martha and Mary. He is welcomed into their home in the village of Bethany. These sisters take two very different approaches when Jesus comes into their home. Martha is the hospitable hostess who stays busy serving their guest. One can imagine her scurrying around the house, bringing food and drink for their guest, and making sure that he was as comfortable as possible. Mary, on the other hand, sits at Jesus' feet and listens to him speak, taking in every word that he has to share.

► Place yourselves in this situation. How would you respond to Jesus' presence in your home?

► Are you more inclined to be like Martha, staying busy and getting things done, or like Mary, one who is more apt to sit still and learn from what your guest has to share with you?

Martha and Mary present two different approaches to the life of faith in Jesus Christ: action and contemplation.

► If the story were to stop right before Martha questions Jesus about her sister not doing any work, which of these two paths would have been preferable?

Martha does good work making their guest feel at home, whereas Mary spends her time sitting and listening to their guest.

► Which of these two approaches is the better one, based on initial appearances?

At first glance, Martha's service to Jesus is admirable. She is trying her best to make him comfortable. But all of this work brings some consternation for Martha, as she sees her sister just sitting at Jesus' feet and not working. Mary is content to sit and learn from Jesus.

► Can you relate to Martha's feelings of jealousy?

► What are some instances in your life in which you have been jealous of siblings or friends for something that they were doing (or not doing)?

► What did you do with that jealousy?

What Mary is doing in this story is actually quite remarkable. It was unheard of, in Jesus' time and place, for a woman to take her place at the feet of a master teacher and assume a demeanor of being a disciple. But there is something within her that tells her that this is what she needs to do, and Jesus wholeheartedly welcomes it. Mary represents a contemplative response to Jesus' teaching, and his positive view of what she is doing indicates that he has a favorable view of both women and disciples who heed his word.

► Think of a time in which you heard a great teacher speak. What was your response to his or her teaching? Were you able to sit there quietly, fully absorbing the teaching being presented to you? How impactful was it for you to learn through that teaching?

Martha's jealousy bubbles up as she views what Mary is doing as being lazy. Martha is constantly working all the time; this is what she knows. Her sister's approach is completely different from Martha's experience and method. So, Martha thinks that Mary is just being lazy. She complains to Jesus and asks him to tell Mary to come and join in the work.

► How does Jesus respond?

He shines the spotlight on her busy approach. He rightly notes that many things distract her, and that these distractions keep her from being able to hear and experience his teaching and presence. Mary, in her contemplative being, has chosen the better approach to experience Jesus' presence in their home.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 238.

Action and contemplation are two aspects of a response to Jesus' message and call in our lives. Action is certainly important, but it is more impactful if it is rooted in a contemplative foundation.

How might one who is inclined towards action foster a contemplative practice that can strengthen the action?

Act on the Word

Marthas and Marys

You will need a Bible for this activity.

Have a session of role-playing with the teens centered on the story of Martha and Mary welcoming Jesus in to their home. Have half of the teens take on the role of Martha, while the other half of the group takes on the role of Mary. Have them take turns pairing up as sisters in this role-play. You, as the teacher, catechist, or youth minister get to be Jesus and share your teaching with them. Read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. While you are reading this sermon, have the teen who is playing Mary sit near you and listen closely to the sermon while the teen who is playing Martha stays busy pretending to serve you as the guest. Invite Martha to come in and out of the room, bringing pretend items to-and-from, all in the name of hospitality for you, the honored guest. After some time, pause the exercise and ask both Mary and Martha to recount what you had shared with them from the Sermon on the Mount. See who was able to learn the best. Rotate through so that all of your youth get the chance to participate.

All in a Week's Time

For this activity, you will need large sheets of paper, pens, or pencils for each teen.

Hand out a sheet of paper and writing utensil to each teen. Have teens position their paper in landscape orientation and draw seven columns across the page. At the top of each column, write the days of the week (one day in each column). On the far left-hand side of the page, write the hours of the day. Invite teens to write their schedules for a typical week. Have them be attentive to all of the things that they normally do during the week. These can include structured activities, such as school, sports practices, club meetings, and so on, and unstructured use of time, such as doing homework, watching TV, spending time with friends. Have each student present his or her schedule to the rest of the group. Once everyone has had the chance to present, spend some time reflecting upon how his or her time is spent.

Closing Prayer

*Merciful God,
still our busy hands,
quiet our busy tongues,
stop our fretting minds,
and let us come to rest at the feet of your Son.
In your Kingdom there is no need to compete
for your love;
let us forsake all struggle and anxiety
and listen quietly to your voice.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.