

## 16<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR C, 2016

A story is told of a grandfather who would take a long walk with Emily his teen-age granddaughter. He took great pleasure in her company. Suddenly she began to offer almost daily excuses as to why she could not accompany him. He was disappointed but did not express it. Finally, his birthday arrived. Emily presented him a beautiful jumper that she had knitted. Then he realized that she had done her knitting when he was out of the house for his walk. He said to her, "Emily, I really appreciate your gift. But the value of your company is greater than this gift. I can buy a jumper, but I cannot buy you. Please never abandon me again."

Today's gospel introduces us to two women: Martha, the perfect host and Mary the perfect disciple. They are both eager to serve Jesus but they go about it in different ways.

Martha is the perfect host. She prepares the house for Jesus and His disciples. She cooks the food and serves everyone because her thinking is that Jesus and his disciples are tired and are hungry.

Martha is the typical cross section of many of our lives. When we have invited someone to our house, we know the worries until the person leaves us, especially if the invited is an important person.

On the other hand, Mary is the perfect disciple. She sits beside the Lord at His feet, listening to His instructions and teaching. She seems to know instinctively that "there is a need of only one thing," (v. 42): to listen to the good news that He brings.

Tom and Jack are seminarians and great friends. They were both smokers who found it difficult to pray for a long period of time without having a cigarette. They decided to go to their superiors and ask permission to smoke.

When they met again, the Tom was downcast. "I asked my superior if I could smoke while I pray and he said 'no,'" he said. The Jack smiled. "I asked I could pray while I smoke. He said 'of course.'"

Martha did good things at the wrong time was her discredit. There is time for everything. There is a time to work and a time to learn and listen. Just like Martha, we too can be drawn to the danger of too much activity. This will result giving less or little attention to our precious relationships with God, family and friends.

In these days we do hear many stories about children who misses the company of their parents, wives who feel lonely without their husbands and husbands who misses their wives.

During an interview the Dalai Lama was asked 'what surprises him the most about humanity', his response was quite mind interesting. He said, "Man, because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived."

Some single men in a Bible study group were discussing who would make the better wife - Martha or Mary. Jim said, "Well, I think Martha would make the better wife. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. It sounds like Martha surely knew how to cook. I would love to be married to a woman like that!" Dave said, "I think Mary would make the better wife. She was always so thoughtful, sweet and loving. I could be very happy, married to a woman like Mary!" Finally, Matt settled the argument when he said, "Well, I would like to be married to both of them. I would like Martha before supper and Mary after supper."

Yes, that's the point. We need both Martha, the active one, and Mary, the contemplative one, in our lives as Christians. Both action and prayer are like two sides of the same coin. We must learn to strike the balance between our prayer life and action. A Christian cannot act properly as a Christian without enough meditation and prayer. From the presence of God, we go to the presence of people. We come out from the presence of people in order to seek the presence of God. Our prayer life must give direction and energy to our action. Food is for our physical life prayer is meant for our spiritual life.