

Today's Gospel offers 2 dramatically contrasting styles of relating to Jesus, the way epitomised by Martha and the way epitomised by Mary.

The way of Martha is the way of one who is preoccupied with the cares of this world and who presumes to know how things should be done. Unlike Abraham in our first reading, Martha does not bother to ask her guest if he wanted her hospitality. She presumed to know what Jesus would want from her and how Mary should behave. Martha asserted her own will and became annoyed by Mary and then Jesus when they failed to see it the way she did.

How many times have each of us presumed to know what is best. How many times have we prayed to God to grant our desires, praying that our will, not God's will be done.

Scripture teaches however that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9) Our will and the will of God are not same. To know his will we must listen to him closely as Mary did and contemplate his word. God's, "word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances." (Psalm 119:105, 106)

The way of Mary was the way of discipleship. Mary took her rightful place at the feet of Jesus. Sitting at the feet of a rabbi / teacher and listening intently to their word was the customary position of a disciple. Mary is not lazy or acting selfishly, she is being a disciple. Jesus made no distinction between women and men. We are all equal, in his eyes and we are all his disciples and as such our place is at his feet, contemplating his personhood and listening attentively to his word. This is exactly what Mary did, and it was not to be taken from her.

One fruit of contemplation however is action. All of our great saints were tremendously industrious people, each in their own way. Each and every one of them worked tirelessly for the Lord. We need only think of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta and St. Pope John Paul II for evidence of this. Their tremendous industry however was the fruit of a profound contemplation of Jesus in the Eucharist, a deep and intimate appreciation of his word, and a total submission to his will.

Rev. Kevin Webb

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C) Martha and Mary

Like Martha and Mary, we too are disciples of the Lord. Like Martha and Mary, we too have Jesus present among us in our Eucharist. May we learn to be fully present before the Lord. May we learn to contemplate Jesus in his Eucharistic presence and in his living word, so that we may come to hear his voice (1 Kings 19:11-13) and submit ourselves lovingly to his Will.

