

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 17, 2022

Prayer for 1st Reading: Abraham cleansed the feet of a stranger. God's response: a gift of life, where there was no life before. His name was Isaac. And so it went: friendship covenant between God and all people of all times. Lord, let us find you in all who pass by our door! Let them be sacraments to us. Please fill them with your life.

Reading I: **Gn 18:1-10a**

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said."

Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then Abraham got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate.

They asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Responsorial Psalm: **Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 5**

R.(1a) He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

One who walks blamelessly and does justice;
who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor;
by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the LORD.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent.
One who does these things shall never be disturbed.

R. He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.

Questions for Reading 1:

1. What does this story of Abraham's hospitality signify? Why is hospitality important? How would you compare it to Martha's hospitality in the Gospel reading?
2. Was God present in the guests? Abraham begat Isaac as a reward for his hospitality. Who needs your hospitality today? If you show hospitality to immigrants or the unhoused, you probably won't get an "Isaac," but what kind of reward might you experience?

Prayer for 2nd Reading: Christ, let us serve as your ministers. Let us take the riches and glory of your love to every part of your world, to every person, so all can know that "The world is charged with the grandeur of God It will flame out, like shining from shook foil:... Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."*

*Quotation from G.M. Hopkins, SJ, God's Grandeur

Reading II: [Col 1:24-28](#)

Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Questions for Reading 2:

1. Paul said "the riches of God's glory" were a "mystery among the Gentiles." What do you think helped Paul spread the good news about the riches of God, to people everywhere, changing much of the world from Gentile to Christian?
2. If you had a task today like Paul's, to take God's love places where it is not known well, what would you use? How might you employ the hospitality of Abraham in the First Reading and Martha's in the Gospel?

Prayer for the Gospel Reading: Fussy Martha readied the table, cooked the meal, poured fine wine. Resting Mary sat herself down at his feet. The sound of his voice, stilled her heart and filled her soul. O Jesus, call us to rest at your feet and listen; to share for a while with you that one thing that is necessary. Let us feast on it, and then, bustle about serving it to others the rest of our day.

Gospel: [Lk 10:38-42](#)

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."

Questions for Gospel:

1. Are you Martha or Mary? Are you a little of each? Would you be agitated with Mary for not pitching in? If you were Martha what would you have done differently? Is it possible to be contemplative and active in ministry at the same time? How?
2. Was Martha wrong and Mary right? Which one is an example of ministry to others? Which is the example of the root of ministry?

Thus, today's Gospel passage reminds us that the wisdom of the heart lies precisely in knowing how to *combine* these two elements: *contemplation and action*. Martha and Mary indicate the path to us. If we want to savor life with joy, we must associate these two approaches: on the one hand, 'being at the feet' of Jesus, in order to listen to him as he reveals to us the secret of everything. On the other, being attentive and ready in hospitality when he passes and knocks at our door, with the face of a friend who needs a moment of rest and fraternity. This hospitality is needed.

Martha and Mary

Pope Francis, Angelus, 7/21/2019

In Exile
by Ron Rolheiser

Tensions within Spirituality

Healthy spirituality has always been a question of putting a number of things into a delicate balance and then walking a tightrope so as not to fall off either side. Spiritual health is very much the task of living the proper tension between a number of things:

1) *The tension between contemplation and action:* How much of our lives should be given over to action and how much to prayer? What is the essence of religion, private prayer and private morality or service to others and social justice? What ultimately will save the planet—soul craft or statecraft? This tension is often depicted as the one that is described in the biblical passage of Martha and Mary. Martha engaged herself in the necessary task of serving others while Mary simply sat at Jesus' feet, doing nothing but loving a lot. Jesus commends Mary, saying she has chosen the better part. Christian spirituality forever after has had to struggle with those words. Is prayer really more important than active service?

What is more important, this world or the next?

***What is more important,
this world or the next?***

The saints would have us do both. A healthy spirituality is not a question of choosing between Mary and Martha, but of choosing both—contemplation and action, soul-craft and statecraft, loving and doing, prayer and service, private morality

and social justice.

2) *The tension between the monastic and the domestic:* Where is God most easily found, in the church or in the kitchen? In the monastery or in the family? In a celibate monk's cot or in the marriage bed? At a shrine or in a sports stadium? The God we believe in is both the Holy God of transcendence and the Incarnate God of immanence. God is, in a privileged way, found in both, the monastic and the domestic, the church and the world, A healthy spiritual life keeps a robust respect for both.

3) *The tension between passion and purity:* What is the secret for depth in sexuality, passion or purity? What ultimately brings us a soul mate, eros or awe? Again, the saints would say it is both. Sexuality will only surrender its real depth and arouse its singular power to unite when it is surrounded with both the fire of passion and the reticence of purity.

4) *The tension between duty and personal actualization:* What ultimately is the higher call, duty or personal fulfillment? Are we in this world to serve others or to exercise fully the talents that God has put into us? Which call to us is the higher moral imperative—that which comes from family, church, and country or that which comes from those centers within us that ache for the personal in love, art, achievement, and immortality? Again, if the saints can be believed, it is a question of both, of balance, of walking a tightrope, of living a daily tension.

5) *The tension between this life and the next:* What is more important, this world or the next? Within what perspective do I make decisions, the span of my years here on earth or the horizon of eternity? How much potential happiness should I sacrifice here in this world in view of eternal life? Is this life a vale of tears or a valley of opportunity? The Christian view is that both are important. When Jesus said that "I have come so that you may have life he is referring both to life after death and life after birth.

6) *The tension between intellect and will:* What is more important, the head or the heart? By which should we guide our lives? What should be the ultimate basis for our decisions, thought or feelings? What is more valuable, insight or love? The wisdom of the saints suggests that a healthy spiritual life, not to mention a full humanity, demands both—head and heart, thought and feelings, the rational and the emotional.

7) *The tension between community and individuality:* Are we in this world primarily to fulfill a personal vocation or is our primary purpose a communitarian one? Might an individual's personal freedom be sacrificed for the good of the group or should the common good be less important than personal freedom? Again, a healthy spiritual life walks the proper tension between these polarities. It refuses to sacrifice the individual for the group even as it asserts that we are essentially communitarian and that we have non-negotiable obligations towards community.

Contemplation and action, the monastic and the domestic, passion and purity, duty and self-actualization, this life and the next, intellect and will, community and individuality: all of these, like a complete set of keys on a piano, are needed if we hope to play all the tunes that the various circumstances of our lives demand. One is wise not to cut off part of one's keyboard.

<http://liturgy.slu.edu/index.html>

(main site from which the Bible study is composed)