

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. Greg Ames

I enjoy reading restaurant reviews; even if the restaurant is not nearby, or if the chance of my getting there are slim. It's interesting to read about the menu, the service, the atmosphere of the restaurant, and whether the review would recommend we get there. Recently I read a review, and it was the end of the review that stayed with me, and said a lot about the reviewer's experience: *On my last visit... the place was packed and loud. People were eating at the bar, while others stood behind them, waiting their turn. At one end, though, a young woman sat with a glass of wine, reading a book, seemingly oblivious to the tumult. She fitted right in. it was just one of the many things I like about the place.*

She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.

Like last week's story of the Good Samaritan, the story of Martha and Mary is well known. And like last week's story, I think it frequently gets misinterpreted, it is not a story, as some people suggest, about the need to balance work and prayer; to pay attention to the Martha and Mary in us all. I am not certain it is meant first to be a story about those women at all. It is a story about Jesus. In the company of Jesus, all are welcome. In the company of Jesus, all the stereotypes, all the preconceived ideas are thrown out. That is what Mary represents. She fitted right in. and so does everyone in the presence of Jesus. So while other homilists might talk about Martha banging the pots in the kitchen, or Mary sitting with all the men, I am focused on the action of Jesus who WELCOMES, LISTENS, SPEAKS.

WELCOMES One of the main themes of the Gospel of Luke is the welcome of Jesus. All are included; everyone fits in-especially those for whom the world of his time made no room: women, the poor, those who were hard on their luck, the disabled. Jesus comes to fulfill what God had already been doing: welcoming the most unlikely people to be part of the plan. That is the story of Abraham and

Sarah; two nomads whose better days were behind them. In the story from Genesis Abraham and Sarah to this journey of faith. And there is the challenge; in our world, our institutions, our churches and our homes: who does not fit in, because unlike Jesus, we have no welcomed them?

LISTENS What drew people to Jesus was that he listened. He said a lot of hard and challenging things. But first he listened. Jesus often visited the family at Bethany; Martha, Mary and Lazarus were provided him with a place to relax. I am sure this was not the first time he heard Martha whining and complaining. Maybe she was a constant complainer; or a person who was easily stressed out. Or maybe she was just having a bad day. Jesus understood how easy it is to define our lives by our disappointments, fears, hurts, complaints and anger. How easy it is for others to define us by those things. Jesus would later raise Martha's brother Lazarus from the dead. He wanted in this moment to raise Martha out of all that stuff and help her become her true self. First, he had to listen to her.

SPEAKS After he listens Jesus looks at Martha and says, you know, there is another way. He does not say it is an easier way, a simpler way, a more convenient way, a faster way or a painless way. It is the way that Mary chose: to be close to Jesus. I suspect that the times when we are most frazzled and stressed out, are when we are not near Jesus. I suspect that the times when we are most frazzled and stressed out, are when we are not near Jesus. In those moments, it is not a matter of working harder, or doing things faster, or being more efficient. It is a matter of sitting down, being quiet and listening. And that is it. Sitting down, being quiet and listening. And we protest: can't I just download it or finish what I am doing? And the answer is no: sit down, be quiet and listen. Yes it is hard to do and it takes time and it does not happen over night. Jesus listens to your complaint. But again, and again he looks at you and simply says: this is better way.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Genesis 18:1-10

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

July 21, 2013

靈 修 生 活

聆 聽 天 主，認 識 自 己

吳 智 勳 神 父

今天的福音是路加獨有的故事，寫得很美。過去，人們往往只從這段聖經表面的意義推測，以為耶穌在這裡主要是譴責瑪爾大，稱讚瑪利亞；譴責為世俗事務操勞的人，而稱讚那些聆聽天主聖言的人。更有人（包括出名的聖人）引申說，祈禱比工作重要，默觀的修道生活比忙碌的在俗生活高超。今天讓我們重新返回這段聖經，欣賞路加要帶出的美麗信息。

這個故事的上文，是講慈善的撒瑪黎雅人，那個比喻的人物全是男性，耶穌最後吩咐那法學士：「你也照樣去做吧」，要求他以慈悲的心，用「行動」為有需要的人服務，可見耶穌並沒有否定「工作」的重要。現在的故事，除了耶穌外，人物完全是女性，為猶太人這是有點不可思議，因為一家之主應該是男的，但路加卻將主人拉匝祿放在一邊，將瑪爾大捧了出來，暗示女性同樣是耶穌基督的門徒，同樣得到耶穌的重視。故事的主角應該是瑪爾大，把注意力只放在瑪利亞身上，似乎不是故事原來的意思。耶穌並無偏愛瑪利亞，祂也愛瑪爾大，願意教導她、提昇她，使她克服自己的困難，成為一個更全面的門徒，指出工作固然重要，但也要聆聽天主的聖言。

在猶太人的家裡，人人都期望做大家姐的，會在家中打點一切；從福音有關這家人的記載顯示，瑪爾大應是做大家姐的。她派人向耶穌報訊：「主，您所愛的人病了」；耶穌來到時，她親自出來歡迎；耶穌要求移開墓門的石，她又出主意說屍體臭了，最好不去動他。可見她是料理一切，工作效率很好的人，用我們今天的話來說，她是一個女強人。但是，這個女強人的內心，有其軟弱的一面：她認識事而不認識人，包括不認識自己；她不知道或不承認自己軟弱的地方，不肯正是自己的弱點，往往利用自己的長處去遮蓋它。這種人要求他人賞識她所做的一切，受不了別人的冷落。現在，耶穌只與她的妹妹談話，沒有理會她正在忙忙碌碌，她覺得很不公平，有受委屈的感覺。或許她心裡想，耶穌是大家的客人，為甚麼瑪利亞可以舒舒服服的與祂聊天，而自己偏偏要做所有的事？她心裡實在很愛耶穌，否則她不會請祂來，也不會在這種場合下，說出自己心底的話。這似乎是她平時累積下來的一種宣洩，在這宣洩裡其實是淌著淚水的，她好像向耶穌申訴：「主啊！世界對我真不公平，連我妹妹也不體諒我的辛苦，您不管嗎？」

面對這樣的投訴，耶穌完全沒有譴責瑪爾大，祂諒解她的感受，欣賞她為諸事操心勞碌，但瑪爾大未能在繁忙的生活裡去學習和認識自己，反而被工作弄到心煩意亂，然後以埋怨去發洩。其實，瑪爾大「需要的只有一樣」，就是靜下來聆聽祂。如果她靜下來聆聽，她會發現耶穌快要入耶路撒冷受難，已不在乎吃甚麼，卻在乎與人分享祂的內心。耶穌邀請瑪爾大停下來，在內心與主相遇，在那裡她會真正認識自己和別人的內心世界，從而知道自己和別人的需要。耶穌邀請她像瑪利亞一樣，「選擇那最好的一份」。

這段故事為我們，特別是有本領的強人，有很大的啟示。強人往往是辦事精明，批判性極強，這樣雖然能夠顯出自己優越的地方，但危險性是不了解別人，人際關係差，往往以成就遮掩自己的弱點，阻礙了自己的成長，養成一份連自己也不察覺的俗氣，例如，他們常常批評別人的工作沒出息，暗示自己的成功，但亦反映出他們未能欣賞每種工作的價值，透露出一種庸俗的氣質。忙碌的人，脾氣往往很差，這時他們最需要的是靜下來，聽聽耶穌願意向自己說甚麼。聆聽耶穌使人明白自己的貧乏，發現別人真正的需要，這是成長的秘訣。

瑪利亞在故事中沒有說過一句話，聆聽耶穌使她不但了解耶穌的內心，更使她明白姊姊的需要，故此任由她申訴而不作任何反駁，她知道能幹的姐姐其實不是需要她幫忙，她發洩後便沒事了。瑪利亞的事業未必如姊姊般成功，但她肯定是個快樂的、有靈氣的人。若要知道自己和別人的需要，不要忘記靜下來聆聽耶穌，人會發現那是甚麼。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 七 月 廿 一 日

創 18:1-10；哥 1:24-28；路 10:38-42