

Homily for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 20-21, 2019

Readings: Genesis 18:1-10A; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10: 38-42

Preacher: Cathy Kamp

The story of Martha and Mary in this week's Gospel could not be more relevant for our times. Martha is "burdened with much serving," so much serving that she feels the need to complain to Jesus about her sister, Mary, who is not helping with the hospitality.

Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things." Today, if Jesus said this to us, we might ask, "Who isn't?" The busyness of our days and the crush to accomplish many things drives us to anxiety about how we will get it all done and worry that makes it hard for us to listen to anything but our own mental chatter. I sometimes imagine Jesus saying, "Cathy, Cathy, you are anxious and worried about many things."

In our culture, we wear busyness as a badge of honor and a sign of our self-worth. Whether in the workplace or the home, most of us seem to feel the need to prove we are busier than the next guy. We're not just busier; we are busy with mission-critical tasks. And we do just what Martha does. Whether a sister, a spouse, or a co-worker, no one around us seems to work as hard as we do, and we find our own ways to let them know it. Or we complain to someone else! Sound familiar? What's the answer to changing these destructive patterns for ourselves and those around us?

The answer is the same today as it was 2,000 years ago. "There is need for only one thing." Jesus *is* the answer. As Christians, our lives and activities need to be fueled by the desire to imitate Jesus in sharing the love of God in everything we do, even the most difficult or mundane of tasks. But we can only begin to emulate the life and ministry of Jesus after we take time to visit with God in prayer. Like Martha's sister Mary, we sometimes need to put off the next thing on the to-do

list until we have taken some quiet time to listen at the feet of Jesus, whether at Sunday Mass or in a daily prayer ritual.

Committing to daily prayer can be very challenging as part of our busy schedules. And when we do make the commitment to pray, it can be even more challenging to settle ourselves, to quiet our minds. That's OK. The idea is to start somewhere, literally somewhere. Pick a spot—in your home, at your office, in nature—but identify a space that becomes the place you go to for no reason other than to listen to Jesus. Keeping some prayer tools nearby might help you get started—a missalette or app with the daily readings, the Bible, a Rosary, a cross you can hold, music, a journal, a candle—whatever helps you focus and tune in to the message God may be trying to speak to you.

In prayer, we often miss the opportunity to set aside written prayers so that we can speak to Jesus from our hearts and listen for a response. This week's Gospel gives us a great place to try this kind of personal prayer. Imagine Jesus using your name in place of Martha's: "_____, _____, you are anxious and worried about many things." Imagine him saying it out of a deep concern for you and genuine desire to take the anxiety and worry away. Share with Jesus what causes you anxiety and worry. Ask Jesus to lift the anxiety and worry from you. Trust that through prayer, Jesus can change your heart.

As Jesus so often did in his ministry, taking time away from your scheduled activities may bring you an internal sense of peace and renewed energy to focus on the things that really matter. It may give you the strength to let go and say no to the things that are not part of God's plan for you. Listening to Jesus in prayer will not magically knock anything off the to-do list but it may infuse your activity with a different sense of purpose and mission, making it less anxiety-filled and more meaningful, more focused on the good than the drudgery.

Go now to that quiet place. Close your eyes. Acknowledge the presence of Jesus and hear Jesus say: "_____, _____, you are anxious and worried about many things."

