

16th Sunday of the Year C

*Martha, Martha,
you worry and fret about so many things,
and yet few are needed, indeed only one.
(Lk 10:41-42a)*



First Reading

Genesis 18:1-10

The Lord appeared to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and bowed to the ground. "My lord," he said "I beg you, if I find favour with you, kindly do not pass your servant by. A little water shall be brought; you shall wash your feet and lie down under the tree. Let me fetch a little bread and you shall refresh yourselves before going further. That is why you have come in your servant's direction." They replied, "Do as you say."

Abraham hastened to the tent to find Sarah. "Hurry," he said "knead three bushels of flour and make loaves." Then running to the cattle Abraham took a fine and tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. Then taking cream, milk and the calf he had prepared, he laid all before them, and they ate while he remained standing near them under the tree. "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "She is in the tent" he replied. Then his guest said, "I shall visit you again next year without fail, and your wife will then have a son."

Second Reading

Colossians 1:24-28

It makes me happy to suffer for you, as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church. I became the servant of the Church

when God made me responsible for delivering God's message to you, the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his saints. It was God's purpose to reveal it to them and to show all the rich glory of this mystery to pagans. The mystery is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we proclaim, this is the wisdom in which we thoroughly train everyone and instruct everyone, to make them all perfect in Christ.

Gospel

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me." But the Lord answered: "Martha, Martha," he said "you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her."

Meditation

In this passage Luke is not opposing two states of life. There are not, on the one hand, contemplative aristocrats of the Christian life, and, on the other hand, the footsoldiers of the apostolic ministry. Jesus' answer to Martha is in no way intended to absolve those who would identify themselves solely with Mary. However, with Martha, occupied by a multiplicity of tasks, Jesus asks only one thing: to listen to his word in order to put it into practice.

All disciples meet the same challenge to balance service and contemplation. Zacchaeus, a model for the Christian disciple, gives half his material goods to the poor (Lk 19:8). The women who follow Jesus "assist him out of their means" (Lk 8:1-3). Yet contemplation of his word is also demanded of his disciples (cf. 10:23-24). Nor are women to be restricted only to "women's work". They too, with men, are called to listen to his word.