

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 20, 2025

SCREEN: Summer 2025

How is your summer going?

Are you taking time to relax?

Has the pace of your life slowed down at all?

Have you done any traveling?

So far, my summer has been a bit of a mixed bag.

Some days have felt quieter,

while others have been just as busy as the rest of the year.

In the summer, our parish staff spends a lot of time planning - we're planning for the dedication of our new Cafe Pius in August, planning for all of our ministries and programs to start up again in September, we've even begun planning for Christmas.

Adding to the busyness, my sister Sharon got married so there was a family wedding and reception to attend.

Which is why I was grateful to be on retreat last week with some of my priest friends.

The opportunity to get away to recharge my spiritual batteries came at the perfect time.

But it's not just me and it's not just priests.

Taking time to recharge is essential - it's something we all need to do.

Because everyone's life can get overwhelming at times between family obligations, work commitments and personal issues.

And summer is a perfect time for us to do this.

Today's gospel reading told us that one of the best ways for disciples to do this is by listening to Christ and making him first in our lives.

Let's dive into the gospel.

SCREEN: blank red background

So we heard about a time when Jesus went to dine

at the home of Martha and Mary - two friends of his who were sisters.

I'm sure he was looking forward to a night off with loved ones.

Some down time to recharge his emotional batteries.

Unfortunately, something happened that upended that plan.

Jesus got pulled into some major family drama.

We heard that Martha was busy in the kitchen preparing the meal,
while Mary kept Jesus company.

Both sisters were doing something important.

But at some point, Martha got upset about this division of labor.

So she complained to Jesus and demanded that he tell Mary to help her.

One of the first rules of entertaining is that you never
drag a guest into the middle of a family dispute.

It creates tension and division.

It makes everyone feel awkward and ends up spoiling the mood.

Worst case, the guest runs for the door and never returns.

But in this situation, Jesus used the opportunity
to say something profound to Martha and Mary and to us.

He began by acknowledging Martha's feelings.

He could see that she was anxious and upset about
many things.

Then Jesus said this to her:

SCREEN: There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part

and it will not be taken from her.

Mary has chosen *the better part*.

What had she chosen?

To be with Jesus, to listen and learn from him.

Wouldn't you love to know what Jesus and Mary talked about?

I would!

I'm sure Mary had questions for Jesus.

What were they and what answers did he give?

Did he offer her advice?

Did he tell stories?

Did they pray together?

Probably all of this and more.

So it's no wonder that Jesus referred to his time with Mary as,
the better part.

Not the only part, but *the better part*.

In all her busyness, Martha had lost sight of what was most important.

By focusing entirely on her 'to do' list,
she ignored the person she was doing it all for.

But let's be clear, Martha was not a bad person.

I'm sure she intended to spend time with her dinner guest
once she took care of everything else.

But that's the issue.

Martha, in her frantic desire to make everything right about the meal
would only be giving Jesus the leftovers of her time, her attention and her devotion.

So Jesus's lesson to them - and to us -

is that we need to make time to be in the presence of God.

To give God the better part - to put him *first* before everything else in our lives.

And promises that when we do,
we remain balanced and focused on what matters most in life.

And we can avoid the resentment and frustration that Martha felt.

SCREEN: blank red background

How do you fill your days?

If you are like most people - myself included -
your week is a juggling act between many responsibilities.

Every day you're dealing with family commitments, work or school,
friends, church, housekeeping, bill paying.

These are all important and necessary things.

But then there are things we can allow to consume endless amounts of our time and attention.

Things like entertainment, the internet, and social media.

Too much screen time can distract us
and make our lives seem even busier.

And the busier you are the more likely it is
that prayer and faith get pushed out of your schedule.

When this happens, you can become like Martha -
feeling anxious and having nothing left to give to God but
the leftovers, the scraps, or nothing at all.

Life for most of us will always be busy, chaotic, and at times crisis-driven.

My family recently went through with my mom's death.

My siblings and I couldn't predict when or how it would happen or how we'd react to her passing.

And we didn't have the power to control it.

What we could control was how
we were going to respond to this huge family crisis.

For me personally, the greatest tool that helped me cope has been prayer.

I take time every day to pray for my mom and my family.

I ask God to help all of us deal with the grief and sense of loss.

And then I listen for God's response
and he always answers.

But it's not like I hear a voice from the clouds.

When I turn to the Lord and share what I am going through,
I experience calm and peace and the assurance that I am not alone.

And with the assurance that God is at my side,
I know that everything will work out - somehow.

And it always does.

I know many of you are dealing with big things right now.

Things you couldn't have predicted and can't control.

But you can control how you respond.

You can be like Martha - anxious and upset about it all.

Which can lead to turning on others and
losing sight of what is most important.

SCREEN: choose the better part

Or you can be like Mary.

You can choose the better part.

You can listen to what the Lord may be saying to you
in the midst of your busy-ness, crisis or uncertainty.

If you feel like your life is out of control,
or feel like your priorities are out of whack.

If you know that you are like Martha, ignoring God
who wants to spend quality time with you,
decide today that you will make a change.

Begin by doing an honest assessment of where God and faith
fit into your life.

Do you make time for regular prayer and worship,
or do they only happen if you have extra time in your day or week?

Are you giving God the leftovers
or do you schedule prayer time first?

I know that these are heavy questions for summertime.

As Catholics, we tend to focus on prayer during Lent.

Today's Gospel explains why prayer is important every day, year round.

Without time set aside for regular prayer,
our lives can become hectic, chaotic, and unfocused.

Which can result in anger, sadness and uncertainty about
one's purpose and where one is headed.

The antidote to all of this is regular, quality prayer time.

Prayer provides a balance to everything I just described.

Prayer has the power to center you.

It can soften your anger, lift you from sadness,
and remove any bitterness in your heart.

Prayer can fill you with kindness, acceptance and understanding about yourself and the people in your life. Prayer has the power to do all of this and so much more. So commit to making time to be in the presence of God. If you do, you will be giving the Lord, “the better part”. Summer can be a great time to experience God all around us. The nicer weather and ability to travel means we can see God’s handiwork in creation: in sunrises and sunsets, at the beach, the lake, the mountains, or your own backyard. We can experience God’s blessings by spending quality time with family and friends. And when we do find ourselves in these moments to take time to be like Mary in the gospel - to just be in the presence of God. So today and in this coming week, I want to challenge you to carve out some time for prayer to listen to Jesus. If you’re a morning person, do it at the start of your day. Rather than turning on a device first thing when you wake up, begin your day thinking about God. While you’re having breakfast or getting your day started - commuting to work - take some time for quiet reflection. If you are not a morning person, find another time that works best for you. Some people find that the end of the day, right before they go to bed, is the best time to reflect and pray. To think about where they encountered God and what Christ may have been saying to them through the day’s events, the people they encountered. Avoid the tendency to fill your free time or in between moments with noise or distraction or endless screen time. And if you aren’t sure how to pray, there are so many great tools to help you. One of my favorites comes from Matthew Kelly - a Catholic writer you’ve heard us mention before.

SCREEN: The Prayer Process

He has a Prayer Process that is perfect for anyone wanting to commit to regular time with the Lord.

On the tables at the exits you can find this pocket size card with his Prayer Process. (hold up)

You can keep this in your wallet or purse or backpack.

So that no matter where you are, you can use it to help you pray.

You can also find it on the summer message series page of on our parish website.

This is just one way to pray, there are so many.

Find one that works for you, find a time that works for you, and then commit.

Jesus said to Martha:

*Mary has chosen the better part
and it will not be taken from her.*

Let us choose to listen to the Lord that we may grow in faith this summer. Amen. +

Link to Matthew Kelly's Prayer Process:

<https://files.dynamiccatholic.com/home/book-release/i-heard-god-laugh/prayer-tools/ThePrayerProcess>