

Our Sunday Readings

GENESIS 18:1-10a
PSALM 15:2-5
COLOSSIANS 1:24-28
LUKE 10:38-42

Dining with the Lord

GENESIS 18:1-10a

Entering the word

Imagine you're one of the people in this story.

1. Describe your surroundings. What do you see? Smell? Hear? How hot is it?
2. What are you doing?
3. Describe those who are with you.
4. What are you thinking about?
5. Whom do you meet?
6. What do you expect from others?
7. How do people treat you?
8. What do you do as preparations are made for the meal?
9. Do you talk with anyone? What do you say?
10. What all do you feel?
11. Is there anything you want to say or do, but don't?
12. How do you reflect on the news of the pregnancy?

Living the word

13. What did your time of reflection leave you thinking about?
14. Did you encounter God in the story? If so, how did God seem?

THE FIRST READING

The promise

Although God promised Abraham and Sarah a child, Sarah hasn't yet conceived. In this story God once again assures Abraham that he and his wife will have a child of their own.

The perfect host

Abraham pitched his tent near the trees (*terebinth*) of Mamre, an ancient shrine about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. He's resting during the hottest part of the day when he notices the travelers. He greets them and offers them refreshment. Even today such hospitality is characteristic of nomadic Arabs (bedouin), but Abraham is remarkable in his humility and generosity.

Entertaining angels

Not until the men ask about Sarah would Abraham have realized that his guests weren't men but supernatural beings. One is God, and the other two are angels (19:1). The story may startle us in its presentation of God talking, eating, and drinking with his friends.

LUKE 10:38-42

Reading closely

1. Where is Jesus going?
2. How comfortable a journey do you imagine Jesus and his friends are having?
3. Why do you think Martha invites Jesus for a meal?
4. What does Mary do?
5. What all do you think Jesus is saying?
6. What do you think Mary is thinking and feeling?
7. What all do you imagine Martha doing?
8. What might the disciples think about the actions of the two sisters?
9. How do you think Martha sounds when she speaks to Jesus?
10. How do you think Mary reacts to her sister?
11. How do you think Martha reacts to Jesus' response?
12. What might Martha have done next?

Living the word

13. Does this story remind you of any situations you've been in?
14. What insights does this story offer you?
15. How does the story challenge you?

THE GOSPEL READING

Hospitality

Since at this point in the Gospel there weren't churches or the internet, people learned about God's kingdom from Jesus and the disciples (9:1f and 10:1f). In turn, these missionaries depended on those they visited for food, drink, and shelter (10:7). Villages did not have restaurants or hotels.

When hosts were receptive to the message of traveling preachers, they might permit their homes to become a house church. A house church served as a sort of home base within a particular village or town from where the missionaries could further spread God's word.

At first Martha does exactly what the head of a household should do for heralds of God's kingdom. She invites Jesus and his disciples into her home and prepares food and drink for them.

Priorities

Martha becomes so preoccupied in attending to the physical needs of her guests that she fails to listen to Jesus. As she busies herself with practical matters, she neglects the opportunity to receive the word of God.

Martha is so absorbed in her tasks that she puts Jesus in the awkward position of acting as an arbiter between herself and her sister. She even goes so far as to tell Jesus what to do!

Jesus' gentle rebuke is a reminder that even those who serve him well can get caught up in aspects of their faith tradition that aren't central to sharing the gospel. Sometimes Christ's followers must pause to check that they are not so focused on peripheral matters they're neglecting to receive and share God's love.

Among the male disciples

People would have expected Mary, a woman, to join her sister in the domestic work, but she surprises everyone by assuming the role of a disciple (v.39). It was customary for teachers of that era to offer formal instruction from a seated position. Disciples sat at the feet of their masters to learn.

Moreover, disciples were usually male. Thus, when Jesus defends Mary's actions, he defends her from her sister as well as from his own male disciples. Some of his disciples would have bristled at the presence of a woman seated among them.

PRAYER

*from the Book of Blessings,
"Blessing Before and After Meals," number 1069*

Blessed are you, almighty Father,
who gives us our daily bread.

Blessed is your only begotten Son,
who continually feeds us with the word of life.

Blessed is the Holy Spirit,
who brings us together at this table of love.

Blessed be God now and for ever.
Amen.