

October 6, 2020 – Tuesday of the 27th Week in Ordinary Time



“Asking the grace to choose the ‘one thing that is needed’ – the one ‘chair’ – of being committed to the Lord and His Kingdom, so that we can enjoy true peace and joy in life!”

(Gal 1:13-24 and Lk 10:38-42)

Luciano Pavarotti was an Italian operatic Tenor. (A tenor is a type of classical male singing voice whose vocal range is one of the highest of the male voice types) He made numerous recordings of complete operas and individual arias, gaining worldwide fame for the brilliance and beauty of his tone and eventually established himself as one of the finest tenors of the 20th century. Luciano relates: “When I was a boy, my father, a baker, introduced me to the wonders of singing. He urged me to work very hard to develop my voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional tenor in my hometown of Modena, Italy, took me as a pupil. I also enrolled in a teacher's college. On graduating, I asked my father, ‘Shall I be a teacher or a singer?’ “Luciano,” my father replied, ‘if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair.’ “I chose one. It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance. It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera. And now I think whether it’s laying bricks, writing a book—whatever we choose—we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that’s the key. Choose one chair!”

Often, we try to find joy and satisfaction in life, by trying to adjust and fit into many “chairs”. We end up in frustrations and irritation and bitterness. Our life gets entangled into a lot of annoyance and resentment. The Result: We feel life is totally unfair to us... We complain and argue.

The Gospel of the Day reflects this common trend of our lives through the incident of Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary. During his journey of ministry, Jesus came to a village and was welcomed in the house of Martha and Mary. Martha demonstrates great hospitality by welcoming Jesus into the home. She gets busy with the tasks of serving their honored Guest. Mary, on the other side, displays great devotion and love, by sitting at the feet of Jesus. She gets immersed into spending time, with the revered Rabbi.

This incident invites us to appreciate the courage and devotion of Mary. The position adopted by Mary was something contrary to the fixed norms for a Jewish woman. She sat the feet of Jesus, just as a student would, while learning at the feet of a Rabbi. This was, however, a role reserved for men. Yet, Mary “chose the better part” (Lk 10: 42).

This incident also invites us to reflect on the words of Christ to Martha. Jesus tells Martha, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her?” (10:41-42). The Lord extends an invitation to Martha to examine her approach.

Jesus is not against her actions of service and of providing comfortable hospitality. But he is concerned that Martha is too” worried and distracted”

Very often our best intentions in life can get spoilt due to our tendency to over-worry or be over-anxious and our noblest deeds of works can be marred due to our unnecessary outbursts of irritation and distractions.

The Greek word used for “distracted” is “periespato”. “Periespato” means to be pulled or dragged in different directions. As a result of this high degree of distraction, Martha fails to maintain an important and basic dimension of hospitality – giving due attention to the guest. Martha also seeks to cause humiliation for her sister, Mary, in public. Martha even goes on to accuse Jesus of “not caring about her”

We live in a world where we are prone to get easily “distracted” – to be pulled or dragged in different directions – like Martha. But can we seek to overcome this crippling tendency by “choosing the better part” of giving whole attention to the Lord and to His Kingdom?

St Paul shows us by his life of making the right choice and being willing to learn and correct oneself, in order to remain in the right choice “For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I, for the traditions of my fathers. But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood...” (Gal 1:13-16)

Life offers us many "chairs" – choices – which can distract us, cause us irritation, and take away our focus from what is most basic and most important. May we ask the grace to choose the “one thing that is needed” – the one “chair” – of being committed to the Lord and His Kingdom so that we can enjoy true peace and joy in life.

Let the words of St Bruno of Cologne, the founder of the Carthusian Order – whose feast we celebrate today – inspire us: "By your work, you show what you love, and what you know"

Let us pray:

Lord, please help me to put things in perspective and not to lose sight of my mission in life, which is 'to love and serve in all things. Lord Jesus, help me not to be so 'worried and distracted by many things' as to neglect to give sufficient time to listen to your word. May I be faithful to Sacred Space, which is a choosing of 'the better part' – choosing one chair - of being committed to You and Your Kingdom so that I can enjoy true peace and joy in life.

Jesus, We Trust in You