

Homily for 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Dcn. Hicks Armor

Today's Gospel is about two things, **choice** and **priorities**.

It presents us with two women, two sisters, and two responses to Jesus' presence. It's a short reading, only four verses, but deeply revealing about **how we live, what we value, and what we choose**.

We all remember the story. Jesus enters the home of Martha and Mary. Martha, the responsible host, busies herself with all the tasks of hospitality. She wants everything to be perfect for Jesus. Meanwhile, Mary sits at His feet, listening.

Martha becomes frustrated. Understandably so. She's doing all the work, while her sister seems to be doing nothing. She even tells Jesus what to do: she says *"Tell her to help me!"*

But Jesus doesn't respond the way Martha expects. Instead, He gently redirects her attention: He says *"You are worried and anxious about many things. Mary has chosen the better part."*

This is not a story about choosing between good and bad. It's a story about choosing between **good and better**. Hospitality is good. Service is good. But even good things can become distractions when they take us away from what is **most important**...being present to God.

Every day we make choices; what to say yes to, what to say no to, how we spend our time, where we give our attention. Some choices are big and obvious. Others are quiet and constant; what we allow to fill our minds, what habits we nurture.

In the case of Martha and Mary, the choice wasn't between sin and holiness. It was a matter of **priority**. Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, to be still, to listen, to learn. Martha chose to be busy with tasks. She allowed her service to God, to get in the way of her relationship with God.

And don't we do the same? How often do we let our schedules, our obligations, even our ministries, crowd out time for prayer, scripture, silence, and presence?

Martha is not a villain, she's relatable. Many of us live with that same anxiety and restlessness. We're doing good things, but we feel scattered, distracted, worn thin.

Notice how Jesus responds to Martha. He doesn't scold her. He calls her by name....twice. "*Martha, Martha.*" It's the voice of compassion. He's not rejecting her. He's inviting her to re-center or re-focus.

The problem isn't that Martha was working. It's that she was **anxious and distracted**. She had lost sight of **why** she was serving in the first place. Her heart had moved away from the presence....toward performance.

Some people think this story means that contemplation is better than action. But that's not quite right. Jesus isn't dividing the world into contemplatives and doers. He's showing us that **our doing must flow from our being**, from a relationship with Him.

Mary reminds us that we need to sit at the feet of Jesus, not once, but regularly. In prayer. In the Word. In the Eucharist. In stillness.... When we start from that place, our actions are rooted in peace, not anxiety. In love, not obligation.

So what might Jesus be saying to us today?

- Are we **so busy... serving** that we forget to sit with Him?
 - Have we made **being productive...** more important than being prayerful?
 - Do we make **time for Jesus** each day.... or only when it's convenient?
- Jesus tells Martha, "There is need of only one thing." That one thing...is **Him**. Everything else finds its proper place when our hearts are grounded in Him.

So today, let us hear Jesus speaking to us...not with judgment, but with love:

"You are anxious and worried about many things. But there is need of only one thing."

Let's take time this week to choose the better part, not just once, but every day. Even five minutes of prayer, of silence, of Scripture, can help us reset our hearts. In the end, what matters most....s not what we accomplish.... but **who we become**, and whether we are becoming more like Christ.

May God Bless all of you.