

Jesus, Martha, and Mary (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

Genesis 18:1-10—Abraham and the Three Men

1. Theophany: an “appearance” of God in Scripture
 - a. “The LORD” (Hebrew *Yhwh*) (18:1, 10)
 - b. “Three men” (18:2)
2. Oaks at Mamre: sacred site of Abram’s altar (Gen 13:18); near to family burial cave of Machpelah (Gen 23:17-20)
3. Hospitality: Abraham and Sarah provide food, shelter, and refreshment (18:3-8)
4. Revelation: “Sarah your wife shall have a son” (18:10)

Psalm 15—He Who Does what is Right

1. Morality: He who “walks” blamelessly = “does” what is right (15:2)
2. Usury: who “does not put out his money at interest” (15:5; Exod 22:25; Deut 23:19-20)

Colossians 1:24-28—Suffering and the Mystical Body of Christ

1. Paul: “completes” in himself what is “lacking” from “Christ’s afflictions” (1:24)

Luke 10:38-42—Jesus, Mary, and Martha

1. Martha: appears to be the homeowner
 - a. Hospitality: “received” Jesus into her house (10:38)
 - b. Service: she was engaged with much “serving” (Greek *diakonia*) (10:38)
 - c. Distraction: she was “distracted” or “pulled away” (Greek *perispaō*) (10:40)
 - d. Anxiety: “you are anxious (Greek *merimnaō*) and troubled about many things” (10:41; cf. Jesus’ teaching against being “anxious” in Luke 12:22-31)
2. Mary: the sister of Martha
 - a. The “Feet” of Jesus: = posture of disciple to master (Luke 8:35; Acts 22:3)

Let thy house be a meeting-house for the Sages and *sit amid the dust of their feet* and drink in their words with thirst. (Mishnah, *Aboth* 1:4; trans. H. Danby)

- b. Discipleship: Mary took the posture of a disciple (10:39)
 - c. Listening/Learning: Mary “listened to his teaching” (10:39)
3. “One Thing is Necessary”: “the good portion” (Greek *tēn agathēn merida*) (10:42)

The Living Tradition

Origen of Alexandria: “You might reasonably take Martha to stand for action and Mary for contemplation. For, the mystery of love is lost to the active life unless one directs his teaching, and his exhortation to action, toward contemplation. For, there is no action without contemplation, or contemplation without action.” (Origen, *Fragments on the*

Gospel of Luke 171; trans. Joseph T. Lienhard)

Cyril of Alexandria: Mary... sat at the Saviour’s feet, and filled her heart with the doctrines He taught, feeling as if she could never have enough of what so profited her. For the Saviour lodged with the holy women, but Mary, it says, listened to Him as He taught; while the other, Martha, was distracted with much service... One of these women was steadfast in her love of learning: but Martha was distracted with much service. Does any one then blame her for being occupied with careful service? By no means. For neither does the Saviour chide her for having proposed to herself the discharge of this duty; but rather He blamed her, as one who was laboring in vain, by wishing to procure more than was necessary. And He did this for our benefit, that He might fix a limit to hospitality. For far better is that other part, of earnestly desiring the divine doctrine.” (Cyril of Alexandria, *Sermons on the Gospel of Luke* 69; trans. R. Payne Smith)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C)

1. Who is it that appears to Abraham? Why was the hospitality shown by Abraham so important in the ancient world?

2. Does Jesus rebuke Martha for being “active” and “serving” him? If not, what exactly is the nature of his correction?

3. Why does Jesus praise Mary? How can you imitate Mary more in your own life?

For Further Study

1. Arthur A. Just, Jr. *Luke*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament III. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003. Pp. 182-83
2. Pablo Gadenz. *The Gospel of Luke*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018. Pp. 214-16.