**“Chosen the Better Part”**

Last week we experienced the parable of the Good Samaritan, a traveler who extended hospitality to a Jew who was robbed and left for death on the side of the road. Similarly, this week, our 1st and the Gospel readings gave us four different types of hospitality.

In our first reading, we heard about Abraham and Sarah being hospitable to their visitors and they were rewarded by God giving them a deadline that in a year’s time, Sarah would have a son. The son would fulfill the promise of God that they would be the parents of many nations. That son was Isaac, their seed from whom the Messiah would come from.

After His mission of preaching, Jesus probably in His humanity was tired of being attacked by His enemies. Jesus then looked for a few moments of rest and relaxation with His friends, Martha and Mary who had been kind to Him. He wanted to get away from the hostility of the Pharisees and Scribes.

However, on getting to their house, Martha complained that she was left by her sister Mary to do all the work of preparing all the food. Martha also was probably jealous that Mary was listening to Jesus while she was busy running around to get a delicious meal ready for their dear Friend. We too in the same situation, would probably react the same way Martha did.

Mary on the other hand, wanted to sit at Jesus’ feet to listen to the words of God. She knew it was a special moment for her to learn about her God because Jesus would soon leave them to continue on His mission He received from His Father.

Mary had Jesus’ full attention and she could ask Him any question she could not have been bold enough to ask in a public setting. Mary’s action reminds us that we must not only welcome and serve others but also make effort to listen to others and learn from them. Hospitality and discipleship are two sides of the same coin.

Jesus does not disapprove of Martha as if He did not care about all her efforts, Rather He wanted her to realize that there are times when the duties of ordinary life should be put aside or at least made simple so she could spend time with Him personally. Satisfying physical hunger was not something He put at the top of His list.

Jesus’ priority is to take people to His Father’s kingdom. As in the case of the Samaritan woman at the well in the Gospel of John, we could tell that Jesus would rather satisfy the spiritual hunger of others rather than His own physical hunger.

When His disciples came back from looking for food in that story, they asked Jesus to eat. He told them, **“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”** His food was, doing the work of His Father. That is why He told Martha that Mary had **“chosen the better part,”** which is life in His Kingdom.

So, the four types of service we have are: Abraham and Sarah were concerned only of the well-being of their guests. Martha on the other hand was concerned about herself because she asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Mary’s service was to listen to Jesus so she would be a better disciple for Him. The fourth service is that of our Lord Jesus who was ready at any time to teach and preach to all about the Kingdom of God.

In this beautiful encounter between Martha, Mary, and Jesus, we see that God loved each and every one of us individually and not merely as part of a large community. Each and every one of us is very important in God’s eyes.

While service to others is important, we must also set time aside daily to have a conversation with God. For example, by reading Scripture, spending an hour with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or attending daily Mass. We need to be both Martha the worker-bee and also Mary the listener and evangelizer.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Jesus to give us the spirits of Martha and Mary for the purpose of His kingdom.