

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

Impact this month

Turn to the Lord in prayer.

Call to mind any situation or circumstance that makes you anxious, worried, or burdens you.

Read Lk 10:38-42 and reflect on the gospel of Jesus, Martha, and Mary. Like Martha, bring your needs to the Lord honestly and without reserve. Like Mary, place your trust in God and listen to him.

Invite God to console you, enlighten your heart, and fill you with peace.

Read Lk 10:25-37 and ponder what it means to love God with all your heart, being, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Ask God to guide your life and actions, especially in relationship to those who most need love, care, and mercy.

Make a renewed commitment to put God at the center of your life and to serve with joy and gladness.

Listen to Jesus.

Choose the better part

I must admit the gospel story of Martha and Mary has often bothered me. I hear the beginning of the gospel and think to myself, "here we go again..." and wonder how Jesus could be so curt with Martha. She was, after all, doing what was expected, trying to be a good host to Jesus and the disciples during their visit. There were surely meals to be prepared, water to gather from the town well, service to be offered. Mary doesn't seem concerned about any of this. She sits at Jesus' feet and leaves Martha to serve their guests.

In reading the gospel recently, I found myself hearing Jesus' words to Martha differently, however.

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing." Perhaps Jesus is expressing care for Martha - she is "anxious and worried." Jesus is trying to tell her to slow down and pay attention to what really matters - him!

It is easy to become consumed by the many things we have to accomplish, children to care for, elderly family members who need help, responsibilities at work, there is so much to be done. Even service at our parish or in our local city can weigh on us, leaving us anxious and worried. Without thinking about it, we lose sight of the most important

thing – our relationship with God, faith in Jesus, and trust in the Holy Spirit. Jesus' words to Martha express his care for her, and for each of us. He is ready to be with us and wants us to be with him, *especially* when we are burdened.



There is need of only one thing.

Martha and Mary were among the first followers of Jesus. And while Mary no doubt learned from Jesus that day as she sat at his feet and listened to him, Martha surely learned as well, as Jesus drew her in and reminded her of what is most important. Through this gospel passage, we are also reminded to "choose the better part." It is only in remaining centered on the Lord that the many activities of our lives have meaning.

What makes you anxious or worried today? Listen to Jesus. You have need of only one thing. Choose the better part.

– Leisa Anslinger

Who is your neighbor?



Jesus' parable of the Samaritan who came to the aid of the man who was robbed and left half-dead on the side of the road has enduring power. So much so that

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

— Lk 10:25-27

the "good Samaritan" is synonymous with one who cares for others without expecting accolades or expressions of gratitude. And yet, we may miss the meaning of the parable because it is so familiar, or fail to take its meaning to heart because it is so challenging to do so.

When Jesus responded to the scholar who wished to trick him, he teaches us what it means to see our neighbor through the heart of God. He exposes the hypocrisy of the religious leaders whose concern for the letter of the law overrode their concern for the injured man and the compassion at the heart of the law. In placing the Samaritan as

the one who was neighbor to the victim, Jesus challenges the social prejudices of the time. Samaritans and Jews held each other in contempt, yet this Samaritan not only cared for the victim, he reflected God's love through his lavish expression of compassion and mercy. The one who was hated became the one revered and respected. Those who observed the law as a series of requirements to check off their list had missed the point.

We must see our neighbors in need and must be good neighbors to them. This is what people who love God do. This is how we are called to live. St. Benedicta of the Cross (St. Edith Stein) who died in the gas chamber at Auschwitz said, "For the Christian, there is no such thing as a 'stranger.' *There is only the neighbor.*"

Who is your neighbor? Are there individuals or people of a particular ethnic or social group that you avoid, hold at arms length or judge with contempt? How are you called to the love and service that is at the heart of Christ's message? Who waits for your compassion, acceptance, selfless sharing, or attention?

Be prepared when you pray

I once overheard a parent ask her son, just home from a raucous spring break trip, how his vacation was. He responded, "you shouldn't ask questions you are not prepared to hear the answer to." The conversation moved on to a different topic.

When we pray for something, are we prepared to hear the answer? I don't mean the answers we've prepared for ourselves. Anne Lamott famously quipped that "you can safely assume you've created God in your own image when God hates all the same people you do." Similarly, we can safely assume that we're forcing God's hand when God has the same remedy, response, or reaction to our prayer as we do. If your prayer is, "please let me win the lottery," then you're not doing it right.

When we really pray, we place our needs, cares, and anxieties before God. We open ourselves and ask for help. We listen; we don't dictate. In doing so, we place our trust in God, knowing that God's response to our prayer is the right response, even if we aren't comfortable with it. For all of the challenges that prayer sometimes presents - it's too hard, it's too boring, I don't have time, etc. - I think this is the real hurdle. I don't get to control the outcome. I don't get to manipulate the response. If I ask the question, I've got to be prepared to hear the answer.

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