

October 8: Living an Integrated Life in Mission

Today's Gospel, which is also used for the feast of Saint Martha, probably reflects a typical scene from the life of Jesus. He had a very close friendship relationship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, often going to their home in Bethany to relax, enjoy their company, share some of Martha's good cooking, and simply rest from his demanding ministry activities.

Saint Luke presents Mary seated near Jesus and listening to him. Martha, being a good host, is busy with all the demands of hospitality. Understandably, she becomes upset that Mary seems to be taking it easy and leaving all the work to her. Jesus lovingly cautions Martha not to be overly concerned about all the details of serving.

Is Jesus rebuking Martha, even disregarding her concerns, when he says that Mary "has chosen the better part"? Certainly not! He is gently reminding Martha to keep everything in balance, to fulfill one's daily duties (work, cook, wash, clean) and still remain centered on Christ (time for prayer and reflection). This is captured well in the Benedictine motto: *ora et labora*, pray and work. We need both prayer and work in order to live a truly Christian life, to accomplish our mission. If we as active evangelizers were to embrace prayer without also performing the tasks inherent in our missionary calling, we would stagnate. When guided by God's Will, our labors bring us closer to Him.

Likewise, our mission work loses its meaning if it is not grounded in prayer, meditation, and reflection. Everything in our lives is *not* under our control. We cannot do anything except through the grace of God. Before we begin our missionary tasks, we must first turn to God in prayer. Rooted in God's love, we can more effectively carry out our mission. In a word, we are to be genuine "contemplatives in action."