

## **We Need to be Both Martha and Mary**

I always felt a bit sorry for Martha, for whenever we hear the Gospel of Jesus visiting her and Mary and their brother Lazarus in Luke 10:38-42, Martha complains to Jesus to ask Mary to help her out to prepare things while Mary is listening to Jesus, and Jesus says to Martha that Mary has chosen the better thing and to not worry. (Scripture scholars suggest that this indicates Martha may have been Minnesotan, or most definitely from the Upper Midwest, because she did not want to talk to her sister directly and make the request, but hoped Jesus would instead speak to her making her feel less uncomfortable).

What people forget sometimes though is that Martha is indeed a saint. And recently, Pope Francis combined the feasts of Martha and Mary, creating the feast day of Martha, Mary and Lazarus that we celebrate this Saturday, July 29th.

It's a wonderful feast day that reminds of the importance of being both Mary and Martha if you will if we are going to grow as Christians and sanctity.

With respect to Mary, she has traditionally been symbolic of the contemplative life. Jesus is right about being with Him as the better thing. For when we are with God, it allows everything else to fall into place. When we pray, we are able to learn from God what to do in our lives. We are reminded of mercy. We are given strength. We find peace. We are better equipped to deal with temptation. And we gain power to evangelize. Prayer, meditation, and finding time to listen to God can do so much for us and are essential.

However, with this, action matters too. Martha was a woman of deep faith; she clearly trusted in Jesus and loved Him. How do we live our faith? We do it through caring for our families; from the sacrifices parents make, or simple acts of love like doing house cleaning or making a meal. We live it out through social justice, and being active in the world to change it for the better.

Both of these things need to work in tandem in our lives. Prayer is important, as is discernment; but we can't spend our lives perpetually on a spiritual retreat if we are going to change the world. Action is also important; but if we are a perpetual busybody or always running around doing a million things we'll be on a spiritual empty tank. This is also true in families; many families are busy doing school stuff, sports, activities and other things - but does the family have time to be a family? To listen to one another over the dinner table, to talk and be together? The healthy family does both, getting to know one another and what's happening in given moments in their lives, while serving one another. This is the ideal.

Martha and Mary represent two very important parts of our spiritual journey: making room for God's voice by listening to the Master, and carrying out what God has called us to do by living our lives. Both have so much to show us, and may we strive to make sure we have that balance in our lives to lead us to spiritual excellence.

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Paul