

Homily of Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C, 2025

Genesis 18:1-10; Psalm 15:2-5; Colossians 1:24-28; Luke 10:38-42

In Genesis 12:3, God promised Abraham, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.” As Abraham and Sarah his wife aged, there was no sign of the fulfilment of this promise. Persuaded by Sarah, Abraham’s maid bore Abraham a son called Ishmael. But Ishmael was not the child of the promise.

We read, in today’s first reading, how Abraham and Sarah showed hospitality to three strangers, not knowing that they were angels of the Lord. Abraham and Sarah were rewarded with a gift of Isaac, who is the child of the promise. God’s promise to Abraham would not have come to fulfilment in the manner it came if Abraham and Sarah did not show hospitality to the strangers. I believe that Hebrews 13:1-2 echoed Abraham’s and Sarah’s encounter with the strangers where it writes, “Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.”

The first reading brings to mind two other biblical accounts of the reward of hospitality. In 1 Kings 17:7-16, the widow of Zarephath, not knowing that Elijah was a prophet, shared with him the “only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug” that remained for her and her son. The widow confessed, “Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” Her reward was, “There was food every day for Elijah and the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry.” In 2 Kings 4:8-17, the Shunammite woman and her husband who showed hospitality to Elisha and his servant were rewarded. “The woman [who was barren] became pregnant, and gave birth to a son, just as Elisha told her.”

The closing statement of my last Sunday’s homily is, “Somehow, somehow, someday, the love or the hatred we give comes back to us. ‘What goes around, comes around!’” Jesus promises us, “Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you” (Luke 6:38).

In today’s gospel, Jesus visited Mary and Martha. Mary sat beside Jesus and listened to him, while Martha was burdened with much serving, and was anxious and worried about many things. She was also upset. She was upset with herself, with Mary, and with Jesus. It is not surprising that Martha was upset. How won’t someone who is burdened, anxious and worried about many things not be upset with oneself and with everyone else??? St. Paul in the second reading (Colossians 1:24) rejoiced in his sufferings for the sake of the Colossian Christians, while Martha in the gospel agonized in her service. What a contrast? St. Paul teaches us to find joy in our service.

Like Mary, we need to create quality time to commune with God in order to nourish our spiritual life. If we do not, there is every possibility that we become like Martha. Demands of life will burden us, keep us anxious and worried, and upset us. There is a saying that the one who is too busy to pray is busier than God wants the person to be. Jesus emphasized the importance of spiritual nourishment to his apostles. At some point in their ministering to people Jesus advised them, “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while” (Mark 6:31-33). Spiritual recollection and retreat need to, also, occupy prominent positions in our calendar as vacations and various kinds of trips do.

Martha complained to Jesus, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.” What is the benefit when someone is hardworking but bitter and always complaining? St. Paul writes in Ephesians 6:7-8, “Do God’s will from the heart, willingly serving the Lord and not human beings, knowing that each will be requited from the Lord for whatever good he does...” And Colossians 3:23-24, “Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance...”

Jesus cautioned Martha, “You are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her,” The one thing chosen by Mary was closeness to Jesus. Let us bring all our burdens, anxieties, worries, upsets, and complaints and lay them at the feet of Jesus, and listen to him speak to us. His words are spirit and life (John 6:63). Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Also, in Matthew 6:25 & 27 he says, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, ... Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span?” In 1 Peter 5:7 we have the invitation, “Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.” And in Philippians 4:6-7, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” May God bless his words in our hearts. Amen.

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