

One Spirit~One Call Service

September 26, 2010

Gospel

Luke 10:38-42 Read by Mary Lou Stewart, St. Andrew parishioner

Our God is with you.

And also with you.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

Glory to you O Lord.

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, 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 Word of God.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Post-Gospel Reflection (Luke 10:38-42)

Mary Lou Stewart, St. Andrew parishioner

"It is not to be taken from her." When this Gospel was read on July 18, my first response was "But it **has** been taken away." I was still reeling from the Vatican's decision to list the ordination of women as a grave offense in the same document as pedophilia.

I have been reflecting on the message of this Gospel since then, and even though I am not a scholar of theology I would like to take a moment to share some of my thoughts with you.

First of all, these "Ordinary Sundays" we are in are not exactly "ordinary." This story of Martha and Mary comes between the Good Samaritan and Lord's Prayer. A pretty good place to be, I think! Here we see Jesus and his disciples on the journey up to Jerusalem, moving from place to place, relying on the generosity of people along the way.

Just the Sunday before, we learned what is required to inherit the kingdom of God: To love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. In the Good Samaritan, we learn what it means to love our neighbor.

But what about the first part of the answer Jesus gave? In this section of Luke's Gospel, we see Martha welcoming Jesus into her home, radiating hospitality, and providing for the welfare of her guests, and yet all is not perfect. As the pressure of serving as host grows

more and more taxing, Martha expects support and asks Jesus to tell her sister Mary to help. But Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet, listening to what he is saying. She is in the position of a disciple. (Acts 22:3) At the beginning of Luke's Gospel, he identifies those who hear what Jesus is saying as "ministers of the word." (1:2). Here, Mary is part of that group. Jesus does not reject Martha; she is a good example of how to love our neighbor. But Mary is a model of how to love the Lord our God. And Jesus tells us that "Mary has chosen 'the better part'."

This path to the Kingdom of God is a difficult balancing act. It took me a long time to realize that this call to discipleship is not just a wonderful, grace-filled call. True discipleship carries a deep and sometimes frightening responsibility.

We all have our own reasons for being here today. I always thought that speaking up was the job of theologians, highly educated women and men. But I can no longer ignore the rancor and animosity and condescension towards women that have invaded our church. For years I claimed that the Hierarchy's attitude toward women and its limitation of our roles in directing the church's future would not affect my own, personal spirituality. I can no longer hold on to that pretense.

The inclusion of women in Jesus' teaching that we see in this story of Martha and Mary is a sticking point for our church today.

How many of you have Martha in your name? We are all Martha. Our Church is very **comfortable** when we are Martha – when we

- Join the altar society,
- Serve coffee and donuts after Mass,
- Work as sacristans,
- Direct youth groups, or
- Teach religious education.

How many of you have a form of Mary in your name? So many of us, and yet our Church gets most **un**comfortable when we want to be Mary:

- When we are outspoken,
- When we challenge the status quo,
- When we ask to be full disciples of Jesus within the Church structure,
- When we ask to sit at the table as we all discern the direction of our church.

Then comes the **discomfort** and fear.

We love our Church. She has been suffering greatly for quite some time. Like Mary, we are sitting in the room with Jesus. We are to be counted among the disciples. We are not slaves in the church. We are not outcasts. We are not unclean. We are called! **We are called!** And we come with gifts of the Spirit. For in Jesus, we are not male or female. We are all, all of us children of God.

There is much work to be done. And we can do it; we will do it, and we will do it together, in a spirit of loving kinship.