

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

[Reading I: Genesis 18:1-10a](#)

[Responsorial Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5](#)

[Reading II: Colossians 1:24-28](#)

[Gospel: Luke 10:38-42](#)

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/071722.cfm#main-content>



Andrei Rublev's *Troitsa*, 15th Cent

The story of Mary and Martha has provoked a good bit of discussion. In contemporary culture, there seems to be a rebuke of those who work hard to make others feel welcome and an affirmation of those who listen to and admire the guest. In the culture of the first century, there were other dynamics to consider.

Hospitality was a needed aspect of society. Public inns were not common, and people depended upon the hospitality of common people. It was unusual for a woman to invite male travelers into her home for hospitality. Luke does point out women more than the other evangelists. This may reflect the reality in the late first century when they often hosted the community in their homes.

Martha is busy with all the details of offering hospitality, including a meal. She is "burdened with much serving." Mary acts somewhat unconventional as she joins those gathered to listen to Jesus. Normally, she would have been active with the details of hospitality as well, but here she is with the guests.

Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to do what is expected. There is no instance where Jesus criticizes someone at the request of another. Jesus invites people to see their own faults first before criticizing someone else's fault. "Why do you notice the speck in your brother's eye ..."

Jesus accepts both sisters as they are and the attention that they offer. Martha offers food and her home. Mary offers her attention as Jesus speaks. Both are great gifts. Martha's time and energy might have been more focused on herself and her expectations than on her guest. She has let worry and her perceptions make her ungrounded. She is acting out of what she perceives as what is expected of her rather than the value of hospitality. Mary has chosen to focus on the guest. She has acted on her priority of the importance of Jesus.

This story's placement following the Good Samaritan parable serves as a balance in the two dimensions of actions and listening. While the Good Samaritan highlights the importance of action, Martha and Mary balance it with the importance of focusing on the teachings of Jesus that should instruct our actions.

Each person has a variety of responsibilities that need to be addressed, whether in family, work, church, or civil society. These are all important and valid. For the Christian, each of these must be guided and implemented by following the teachings of Jesus. Our deeds achieve their true fulfillment through the good news that Jesus offers.

The passage from Genesis presents even more starkly the importance of hospitality. Abraham and Sarah had settled near Hebron (about twenty miles south of Jerusalem). It is at the edge of the desert and not a very hospitable environment.

Abraham sees figures near his tent. These figures are called men, angels, and even the Lord. Later, Christian tradition sees a visit of the Holy Trinity as painted in the icon at the top of the page. This represents a combination of various oral traditions about Abraham. (Abraham lived about 1800 years before Jesus, and Genesis was compiled about a thousand

years before Jesus.) There is great hesitation about speaking of the presence of God. Was God the visitor, an angel, or three people sent by God? God's presence is manifest through the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

Abraham welcomes the presence of the visitors and shows them generous hospitality: water for their feet, rest under a tree, fresh bread, and meat. The guests are welcomed like royalty! The guests enjoy the hospitality and promise that Sarah will have a son to his heir. God had promised an heir to him earlier, and the promise was coming to fulfillment.

The texts express God's fidelity (who promised Abraham a new land and an heir). It invites us to be open to God's presence in many situations and places along life's journey.

In the Letter to the Colossians, Paul offers meaning to the sufferings of those who minister for the Gospel. This suffering is filling in the work of Christ, who could only be in one place. Apostles and disciples are now bringing the saving work of Christ to all the world. God desires that all people, Jew and Gentile, share in the redemption that Christ brought through his death and resurrection. All who go out to bring this Good News to others are completing the work which Jesus began and achieved in Jerusalem.

Reflection Questions:

When you are critical of another person, what do you do?

In what ways do you sit at the feet of Jesus and allow his words to inform your actions?

How do you balance the responsibilities of serving others and growing as a disciple?

How do you recognize God's presence in your life?

Themes:

Hospitality

Service

Avoiding judgment of others

Nothing is impossible for God

Prayer Suggestions:

For freedom from jealousy and criticism: that the Spirit will guide us in sharing and living out our gifts even when those of others seem more significant

For all who are busy with work and progress: that God will free us from overworking, help us find the life-giving balance, and recognize the relationships which bring us life

For all who live a life of service, particularly those who care for the sick, assist travelers, or serve in public safety: that they may offer their service joyfully and be renewed by God's love

For all who do not feel appreciated: that they may find in Christ the courage to continue to love and serve without praise or recognition

For all couples who wish to become pregnant: that God will hear the desires of their hearts and gift them with a child to love, nurture and guide to maturity