

LISTENING WITH MARY & MARTHA
16th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME – 17 JULY 2022



THREE LINKED GOSPEL PASSAGES ON LOVE IN ACTION & PRAYER

In Mary and Martha, we can discover their goodness in each of us.
The waiting on God in prayer and the service of others.

Both are good people.

Their story in Luke's Gospel 10:38-42 rests between

- Jesus explaining love of neighbour by the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37)
- and Jesus teaching people how to pray. (Luke 11:1-4)

The action of the Samaritan traveler was not a distraction,
it was genuine service to someone in desperate need.
It was love in action.

The action of Jesus was not a distraction.

Jesus taught people how to pray.

Again it was responding to a genuine need of people to learn how to pray.

The encounter with Mary and Martha rests between passages

- action – the merciful compassion and love of the Good Samaritan parable
- and the way of prayer

All three passages fit together. Between these three passages, we learn
about the relationship between listening to God and helping our neighbour.
Let us read about Martha and Mary in the Gospel together.

GOSPEL OF LUKE 10:38-42

*“Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village,
where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home.
She had a sister named Mary,
who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.*

*But Martha was distracted by her many tasks;
so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'
But the Lord answered her,
**'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;
there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part,
which will not be taken away from her.'***

Martha welcomed Jesus into her home.
We hear how Mary listened to Jesus as a disciple (sits at his feet).
We hear how Martha wanted Jesus to tell Mary then to help her.

With affection and honesty, Jesus teaches Martha about herself:
'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;'

Then Jesus pointed out, that there is a choice we make in life –

- To listen attentively to God and to within ourselves and to love our neighbour
- or to allow ourselves to be distracted by many things.

We can work purposefully with God,
or we can allow our time and work to be full of distractions.

Other passages in Luke's Gospel teach us about
prayer in humble attentiveness and humble service,
as we respond to God's invitation to love God and to love our neighbour.

PLENARY COUNCIL

In the four-year Plenary process in Australia we were called to listen

- to the Holy Spirit.
- to listen to each other.

There is a real depth to listening.

Mary in today's Gospel story listened intently.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (ACTA)

In the last three days, July 14-16, the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA) has convened for its annual conference.

This year the title was *"The Radical Paradigm Shift of the Church in Australia"*

Pope Francis has previously spoken about a "radical paradigm shift" in the world and in the church today.

ACTA said that,

"In the context of Australia's Plenary Council and the wider Church's Synod on Synodality, this conference seeks to think theologically about the vision of Church Pope Francis is inviting us to. As always, papers will also be considered on other areas that members are working on."

The ACTA Conference is timely.

In one of the Plenary Council motions,

expertise is sought from our theologians and biblical scholars in Australia.

Their listening to the Spirit, scholarly research, new proposals and resources will be a blessing as we move with the Holy Spirit today and into the future.

THREE SENSITIVITIES TO LISTENING DEEPLY

Pope Francis has named three such complementary dimensions of listening.

In his

"Christus vivit": Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God

- Listening unconditionally to someone.
- Discernment where grace or temptation is present (including distraction)
- Perceiving where a person truly wants to move.

To listen in this way requires sensitivity.

Let us read about these three sensitivities in listening.

"292. The first kind of sensitivity is directed to the individual.

It is a matter of listening to someone who is sharing his very self in what he says.

A sign of this willingness to listen is the time we are ready to spare for others.

More than the amount of time we spend,

it is about making others feel that my time is their time,

that they have all the time they need to say everything they want.

The other person must sense that I am listening unconditionally,

without being offended or shocked, tired or bored.

... Attentive and selfless listening is a sign of our respect for others, whatever their ideas or their choices in life."

"293. The second kind of sensitivity is marked by discernment.

It tries to grasp exactly where grace or temptation is present,

for sometimes the things that flit across our minds are mere temptations that can distract us from our true path.

I need to ask myself what is it that the other person is trying to tell me,

what they want me to realize is happening in their lives.

Asking such questions helps me appreciate their thinking and the effects it has on their emotions.

This kind of listening seeks to discern the salutary promptings of the good Spirit who proposes to us the Lord's truth,

but also the traps laid by the evil spirit – his empty works and promises.

It takes courage, warmth and tact to help others distinguish the truth from illusions or excuses. "

"294. The third kind of sensitivity is the ability to perceive what is driving the other person.

This calls for a deeper kind of listening, one able to discern the direction in which that person truly wants to move.

Apart from what they are feeling or thinking right now,

and whatever has happened up to this point in their lives,

the real issue is what they would like to be.

This may demand that they look not to their own superficial wishes and desires,

*but rather to what is most pleasing to the Lord, to his plans for their life.
And that is seen in a deeper inclination of the heart,
beyond the surface level of their likes and feelings.
This kind of listening seeks to discern their ultimate intention,
the intention that definitively decides the meaning of their life.
Jesus knows and appreciates this ultimate intention of the heart.
He is always there, ready to help each of us to recognize it.
We need but say to him: "Lord, save me! Have mercy on me!" "*

As we remember

- Mary and Martha,
- the parable of the Good Samaritan,
- the way of praying the prayer of Jesus,
- those times when are distracted by many things,
- the invitation of Pope Francis to pray,

may we pray

- for the sensitivity to listen
- and for an open heart to serve others in need.

Let us pray.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/071722.cfm>

Pope Francis *Christus vivit*: *Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God*

[image created from: <https://freebibleimages.org/photos/lumo-mary-martha/>]
