



(ZENIT, Vatican City, July 17, 2016).- Receiving a guest into our home doesn't require so many things, says Pope Francis, as only one thing is necessary: listening to the guest, hearing the thoughts of his heart, so that he feels he is truly among family.

This was the Pope's reflection today before praying the midday Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter's Square.

Commenting on the Gospel of today from Luke, which recounts the story of Mary and Martha receiving Jesus in their home, the Holy Father spoke about the virtue of hospitality.

"In busying herself and doing things, Martha runs the risk of forgetting — and this is the problem — the presence of her guest, which in this case is Jesus," the Pope explained. "She forgets the presence of her guest."

The Holy Father said that a guest — any guest, not just Jesus — doesn't need only to be served and fed. "Above all it is necessary that he is listened to," he said.

With listening, a guest is welcomed as "a person, with his history, his heart rich in sentiments and thoughts, so that he might feel truly that he is among family."

Failing to do this, the Pope said, is like treating the guest like a rock.

"A guest must be listened to," Francis emphasized, adding, "Certainly, the answer Jesus gives Martha — when he tells her that only one thing is necessary — finds its full meaning in reference to hearing the word of Jesus himself, this word that enlightens and sustains all that we are and all that we do. If we are going to pray, for example, before a crucifix, and we talk and talk and talk and then we leave, we don't listen to Jesus. We don't allow him

to speak to our hearts.”

Lost virtue

Pope Francis said that in understanding hospitality in this way — with an emphasis on listening so as to respect the personhood of guests — we see that it is a human and Christian virtue, and one that “runs the risk of being left aside.”

There is an increasing number of guest houses and types of accommodations, he said, “but in these places, a true hospitality isn’t always lived out.”

Are the stories of the ill, the marginalized, the refugee, the migrant listened to, he asked.

“Even in one’s own house, among one’s own family, it’s easier to find service and care of various types than listening and welcome,” the Pope lamented.

“Today we are so busy and in such a hurry, with so many problems, some of which are unimportant, that we lack the capacity to listen. We are constantly busy and thus we don’t have time to listen,” he said.

The Pope then turned his reflection to questions: “You, husband, do you have time to listen to your wife? You, wife, do you have time to listen to your husband? You, parents, do you have time, time to lose so as to listen to your children, or your grandparents, the elderly?”

Grandparents, especially, he said, need to be heard.

“I ask you to learn to listen and dedicate more time to this,” the Pope concluded. “In the capacity to listen is the root of peace.”

Here is a ZENIT translation of the address Pope Francis gave this morning before praying the midday Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter’s Square.

—

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

In the Gospel for today, the Evangelist Luke recounts that Jesus, as he journeyed toward Jerusalem, goes into a town and is welcomed at the house of two sisters: Mary and Martha (cf Luke 10:38-42). Both of them welcome the Lord, but they do so in different ways. Mary sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to his word (cf. v 39), while Martha is very busy preparing things. At at

one moment, she says to Jesus, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.” (v 40). And Jesus responds, “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” (vs 41-42).

In busying herself and doing things, Martha runs the risk of forgetting — and this is the problem — the presence of her guest, which in this case is Jesus. She forgets the presence of her guest.

A guest doesn’t need to be merely served, fed, and cared for in every way. Above all it is necessary that he is listened to — recall well this word — to listen. That the guest might be welcomed as a person, with his history, his heart rich in sentiments and thoughts, so that he might feel truly that he is among family. But if you welcome a guest in your house and you continue doing things, and you have him sit down and be quiet, you quiet him, as if he were a rock — the guest made of rock. No.

A guest must be listened to. Certainly, the answer Jesus gives Martha — when he tells her that only one thing is necessary — finds its full meaning in reference to hearing the word of Jesus himself, this word that enlightens and sustains all that we are and all that we do. If we are going to pray, for example, before a crucifix, and we talk and talk and talk and then we leave, we don’t listen to Jesus. We don’t allow him to speak to our hearts.

To listen — this word is key. Don’t forget it. We can’t forget that the word of Jesus enlightens us; it sustains us and sustains all that we are and do.

We shouldn’t forget as well that in the house of Martha and Mary, Jesus — before being Lord and Teacher — is pilgrim and guest. Thus, his response has this first and more immediate significance: “Martha, Martha, why do you worry so much over the guest that you come to the point of forgetting his presence?” The guest of rock.

To welcome him, many things aren’t necessary; rather, just one thing is necessary: to listen to him, the word, to listen to him, show him a fraternal attitude, such that he feels that he is among family, and not in some temporary stopping-place.

Understood in this way, hospitality, which is one of the works of mercy, is seen truly as a human and Christian virtue, a virtue that in today’s world, runs the risk of being left aside. In fact, there’s a growing number of guest houses and accommodations, but in these places, a true hospitality isn’t always lived

out.

Various institutions are established to assist in many forms of illness, loneliness, marginalization, but the likelihood diminishes that one who is a foreigner, marginalized, excluded, can find someone ready to listen to him. The foreigner, the refugee, the migrant — to listen to this sorrowful story. Even in one's own house, among one's own family, it's easier to find service and care of various types than listening and welcome.

Today we are so busy and in such a hurry, with so many problems, some of which are unimportant, that we lack the capacity to listen. We are constantly busy and thus we don't have time to listen.

I would like to ask all of us, and each one answers in his heart: You, husband, do you have time to listen to your wife? You, wife, do you have time to listen to your husband? You, parents, do you have time, time to lose so as to listen to your children, or your grandparents, the elderly? "Grandparents are always talking, they are boring." But they need to be heard. To listen. I ask you to learn to listen and dedicate more time to this. In the capacity to listen is the root of peace.

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of listening and attentive service, teach us to be welcoming and hospitable with our brothers and sisters.

[Angelus] [Translation by ZENIT]