



1) Opening prayer

Father,
your love for us
surpasses all our hopes and desires.
Forgive our failings,
keep us in your peace
and lead us in the way of salvation.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - Luke 10,38-42

In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking.

Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.'

But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

3) Reflection

- Context. The journey of Jesus, undertaken in 9, 51, is surrounded by particular encounters, among which with the Doctors of the Law (10, 25-37), that precedes the encounter with Martha and Mary (vv. 38-42). Above all, there is a doctor of the Law who asks Jesus a question and that for the reader it becomes a convenient occasion to discover how eternal life is inherited or gained which is intimacy with the Father. One can have access to eternal life by participating in the mission of Jesus, the first one sent who has shown us God's mercy fully (v. 37). In Jesus the Father has become close to men, he has shown his paternity in a tangible way. At the end of the encounter the expression

that Jesus addresses to the Doctor of the Law and to every reader is crucial: “Go, and do the same yourself” (v. 37). To become a neighbour, to get close to others as Jesus did makes us become instruments to show in a living way the merciful love of the Father. This is the secret key to enter into eternal life.

- Listening to the Word. After this encounter with an expert of the Law, while he is on the way, Jesus enters into a village and is welcomed by old friends: Martha and Mary. Jesus is not only the first one sent by the Father but he is also the one who gathers together men and in our case the members of the house of Bethany, in so far as he is the only Word of the Father. If it is true that there are many services to be carried out, welcoming, attention to the needs of others, and even more it is true that what is irreplaceable is listening to the Word. The account that Luke gives is a real episode and at the same time an ideal. It begins with the welcome of Martha (v. 38), then, it sketches Mary with an attitude typical of the disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus and totally attentive to listen to his Word. This attitude of Mary is extraordinary because in Judaism at the time of Jesus it was not permitted for a woman to go to the school of a Teacher, a Master. Up until now we have a harmonious picture: the welcome of Martha, the listening of Mary. But soon the welcome of Martha will be transformed into super activism: the woman is “pulled”, divided by the multiple services; she is so absorbed that she is unable to control the domestic services. The great amount of activities, understandable for such a guest, becomes however, disproportionate so much so as to prevent her living what is essential precisely in the time that Jesus is present in her house. Her worry or concern is legitimate, but then it becomes anguish, a state of mind that is not convenient when a friend is welcomed.

- Relate service to listening. Her service of acceptance, of welcome is very positive but it is detrimental because of this state of anxiety with which she carries it out. The Evangelist makes the reader glimpse to show that there is no contradiction between the ‘diaconia’ of the table and that of the Word, but he wants to suggest that the service should be related to listening. Because she did not relate the spiritual attitude of service to that of listening, Martha feels that she has been abandoned by her sister, but instead, of dialoguing with Mary, she complains with the Master. Trapped in her solitude she goes against Jesus who seems to be indifferent to her problem (“Lord do you not care”...) and then with the sister, (“that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself?”). In his response Jesus does not reproach her, nor criticize her, but he tries to help Martha to recover that which is essential at that moment: listening to the Master. He invites her to choose that part, unique and a priority that Mary has spontaneously taken. The episode invites us to consider a danger which is always frequent in the life of Christians: anxiety, worry, super activism that can isolate us from communion with Christ and with the community. The danger is more underhanded because frequently the material concerns or worries carried out with anxiety, we consider them a form of service. What presses Luke is that in our communities the priority that should be given to the Word of God, and to listen to it, should not be neglected. Before serving the others, the relatives, and the ecclesial community it is necessary to be served by Christ with His Word of grace. And thus immersed in the daily tasks, like Martha, we forget that the Lord desires to take care

of us... It is necessary, instead, to place in Jesus and in God all our concerns and worries.

4) Personal questions

- Do you know how to relate service to listening to the Word of Jesus? Or rather do you allow yourself to be taken up by anxiety because of the multiple things to be done?
- Have you understood that before serving you have to accept to be served by Christ? Are you aware that your service becomes divine only if previously you will have accepted Christ and his word?

5) Concluding Prayer

Yahweh, you examine me and know me,
you know when I sit, when I rise,
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You watch when I walk or lie down,
you know every detail of my conduct. (Ps 139,1-3)