



### 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 Jesus 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

? Today's Gospel presents the episode of Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus. Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word. Martha, in the kitchen was busy doing the domestic work. This family, friend of Jesus is frequently mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 10, 38-41) and of John (Jn 11, 1-39; 12, 2).

? Luke 10, 38: "The friendly house in Bethany. At that time, Jesus came to a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house". Jesus was going toward Jerusalem, where he would die. He arrived to Martha's house and she welcomes him. Luke does not say that Martha's house was in Bethany. John tells us that Martha's house

was in Bethany, near Jerusalem. The word Bethany means House of Poverty. It was a village on the Mount of Olives, close to Jerusalem. When he was in Jerusalem, Jesus usually went to the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus (Jn 12, 2)

?It is impressive to see how Jesus entered and lived in the houses of the people: in Peter's house (Mt 8, 14), of Matthew (Mt 9, 10), of Jarius (Mt 9, 23), of Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7, 36), of Simon the leper (Mk 14, 3), of Zacchaeus (Lk 19, 5). The official recognizes: "I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof" (Mt 8, 8). People looked for Jesus in his house (Mt 9, 28; Mk 1, 33; 2, 1; 3, 20). The four friends of the paralytic stripped the roof to lower the stretcher where the man was and put him before the place where Jesus was teaching the people (Mk 2, 4). When he went to Jerusalem, Jesus stopped in the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus (12, 2). In sending out the disciples, their mission was to enter in the houses of the people and take peace (Mt 10,12-14; Mk 6,10; Lk 10,1-9).

? Luke 10, 39-40: The attitude of the two sisters. "Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking; Martha was distracted with all the serving". Two important attitudes, always present in the life of Christians: to be attentive to the Word of God and to be attentive to the needs of persons. Each one of these attitudes demands total attention. For this reason, both live in continuous tension which is expressed in Martha's reaction: "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me". This is also expressed in the reaction of the Apostles before the problem which arose in the community of Jerusalem. The service at the tables took up all their time and they could not dedicate themselves completely to the announcement of the Word. This is why the community met together and they said: "It would not be right for us to neglect the Word of God so as to give out food" (Ac 6, 2).

? Luke 10, 41-42: Jesus' answer. "Martha, Martha! 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". Martha wanted Mary to sacrifice her attention to the Word and to go and help her in the service of the table. But one attitude cannot be sacrificed in favour of another one. What is necessary is to attain a balance. It is not a question of choosing between contemplative and active life, as if the first one was better than the latter. It is a question of finding a just distribution of the apostolic tasks and the ministries in the community. Basing oneself on this word of Jesus, the Apostles asked the community to choose seven deacons (servants). The service at the tables was entrusted to the deacons and in this way the Apostles would be able to continue their pastoral activity: "to dedicate themselves completely to prayer and to the service of the Word" (Ac 6, 4). It is not a question of trying to find in this word of Jesus an argument to say that contemplative life in the monasteries is superior to the active life of those who do pastoral work. Both of these activities have something to do with the proclamation of the Word of God. Martha cannot oblige Mary to sacrifice the attention to the Word. The interpretation of the mystic of the Middle Ages is beautiful. The Dominican friar Mestre Eckart who said: Martha already knew how to work and serve at table without compromising or impairing in any way, her attention to the presence and the word of God. Mary, he says, was still learning at the feet of Jesus. This is why she could not be

interrupted. Mary chooses that which for her was the better part. The description of the attitude of Mary before Jesus recalls the other Mary. Of whom Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it" (Lk 11, 27).

#### **4) PERSONAL QUESTIONS**

? How do you try to find a balance in your life between the desire of Mary and the concern of Martha?

? In the light of the response of Jesus to Martha, the apostles knew how to find a solution to the problem of the community of Jerusalem. Does the meditation on the words of Jesus and his gestures help me to enlighten the problems of my life?

#### **5) CONCLUDING PRAYER**

The works of his hands are fidelity and justice,  
all his precepts are trustworthy,  
established for ever and ever,  
accomplished in fidelity and honesty. (Ps 111,7-8)