



### 1) OPENING PRAYER

God our Father and protector,  
without you nothing is holy,  
nothing has value.

Guide us to everlasting life  
by helping us to use wisely  
the blessings you have given to the world.

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

- The dynamics of the account. The condition of Jesus as an itinerant Teacher offers Martha the possibility to receive him in her house. This account presents the attitude of both sisters: Mary sitting down at Jesus' feet is all taken up listening to his Word; Martha, instead, is taken up completely by many services and she gets close to Jesus to protest about her sister's behaviour. The dialogue between Jesus and Martha occupies a long space in the account (vv.40b-42): Martha begins with a rhetorical question, "Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself?"; then she asks for the intervention of Jesus so that he can call the sister back to the domestic work which she has abandoned: «Tell her to help me». Jesus answers in an affectionate tone; this is the sense of the repetition of the name, "Martha, Martha": he reminds her that she

is concerned about “many things”, and in reality she needs “only one” and he concludes recalling that the sister has chosen the best part, and will not be taken away from her. Luke has built up this account on a contrast: the two different personalities of Martha and Mary; the first one is all taken up by “many things”, the second one does not do even one, she is all taken up with listening to the Master. The purpose of this contrast is to underline the attitude of Mary who dedicates herself to listen fully and totally to the Master, thus becoming the model of every believer.

- The person of Martha. She is the one who takes the initiative to receive Jesus in her house. In dedicating herself to receive the Master she is full of anxiety for the multiplicity of things to be prepared and by the tension of seeing herself alone to do it all. She is taken up by so much work, she is anxious, and experiences a great tension. Therefore, Martha “goes to Jesus” and addresses him a legitimate question for help: why should she be left alone by the sister. Jesus answers seeing that she is only worried, she is divided in the heart between the desire of serving Jesus with a meal worthy of his person and the desire to dedicate herself to listen to him. Jesus, therefore, does not disapprove the service of Martha, but only the anxiety with which she does it. But before, Jesus had explained in the parable of the sower that the seed that fell among the thorns recalls the situation of those who listen to the Word, but allow themselves to be taken up by other concerns (Lk 8, 14). Therefore, Jesus does not disapprove the work of Martha, the value of acceptance and welcoming concerning his person but he warns the woman about the risks in which she may fall: the anxiety and agitation. Jesus had already said something about these risks: “Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, and everything else will be given to you as well” (Lk 12, 31).

- The person of Mary. She is the one who accepts the Word: she is described with the imperfect form: “she listened”, a continuing action in listening to the Word of Jesus. Mary’s attitude is in contrast with that full of anxiety and tension of her sister. Jesus says that Mary has preferred “the best part” that corresponds to the listening of his Word. From the Word of Jesus the reader learns that there are not two parts of which one is qualitatively better than the other, but there is only the good one: to accept His Word. This attitude does not mean the evasion from one’s own tasks or daily responsibilities, but only the knowledge that listening to the Word precedes every service, every activity.

- Balance between action and contemplation. Luke is particularly attentive to link listening to the Word, to relationship with the Lord. It is not a question of dividing the day in times dedicated to prayer and others to service, but attention to the Word precedes and accompanies the service. The desire to listen to God cannot be substituted by other activity: it is necessary to dedicate a certain time and place to seek the Lord. The commitment to cultivate listening to the Word comes from the attention to God: everything can contribute: the environment of the place, the time. However, the desire to encounter God should come from within one’s own heart. There is no technical element which automatically leads one to encounter God. It is a problem of love: it is necessary to listen to Jesus, to be with Him, and then the gift is communicated, and falling in love begins. The balance between listening and service involves all believers; in family life as well as in professional and social life: What can we do so that baptized persons

persevere and attain the maturity of faith? We should educate ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This is the most difficult but surest way to attain maturity of faith.

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

- Do I know how to create in my life situations and itineraries of listening? Do I limit myself only to listen to the Word of God in Church, or rather, do I dedicate myself to personal and profound listening looking for suitable times and places?
- Do you limit yourself to a private use of the Word or do you proclaim it in order to become light for others and not only a lamp which lights one's own private life?

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

Yahweh, who can find a home in your tent,  
who can dwell on your holy mountain?  
Whoever lives blamelessly, who acts uprightly,  
who speaks the truth from the heart. (Ps 15,1-2)