

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time we hear the account of Martha and Mary. Jesus enters the town of Bethany and is welcomed into the home of Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus. While Mary sits by our Lord's feet listening to His teachings, Martha is running around trying to prepare a meal for our Lord. Then Martha complains to Jesus of her sister saying, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?" The Lord said to her in reply, "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." (Luke 10:40-42).

We may be often quick to rebuke Martha or even judge her, but if we are being honest with ourselves, we would probably be upset as well. Jesus Himself entered her home and she wanted to make everything perfect for Him, while her sister was not helping her at all. She could have used her help very much. Her complaint is not unreasonable. When she does complain, Jesus does not rebuke her. He simply acknowledges that she is anxious about her duties and that "Mary has chosen the better part." He is not implying that Martha is doing something wrong, but rather what Mary is doing is better. Why is it that Mary's part is better? It is because her part "will not be taken away from her." While tending to worldly necessities and ministries is important, they will pass away and will be taken from us. Martha had focused her attention primarily on worldly needs, which made her anxious and worrisome, while Mary focused her attention on Christ, which gave her great peace and relaxation. The search for wisdom is the greater part. How often do we focus our attention on the temporal world instead of on the heavenly one? How often do we become so anxious by our ministries that they become burdensome to us? It is when these things become idols that we fall into stress and worry. It is when we engulf ourselves in what is temporal rather than what is eternal. We cannot lose sight of this. Once we focus on that which is eternal, we will be at greater peace. When we direct our minds more towards the search for wisdom and grace, we will be given a greater sense of security, so much so that the worries of this world will not seem as worrisome at all. In the words of Saint Ambrose,

May you then like Mary be influenced by the desire of wisdom. For this is the greater, this the more perfect work. Nor let the care of ministering to others turn your mind from the knowledge of the heavenly word, nor reprove or think [lazy] those whom you see seeking after wisdom. (*Catena Aurea, Gospel of Saint Luke*)