

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson  
**17th July 2022 - 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (Year C): 1st: Genesis 18:1-10. Psalm: 14. 2nd: Colossians 1:24-28. **Gospel:** Luke 10:38-42.

Life can seem hectic, and noisy, lots of hustle and bustle: constant noise and activity 24/7 as they say today. And although modern technology is supposed to make life easier, it certainly seems not to be the case. Noise is hugely amplified beyond what our ancestors had to endure.

The consumeristic ethic trains us to turn every desire into a compulsion, every want into a need. But the voice of the Master says: "Few things are needed, indeed only one." Paying attention to the Lord, deepening our faith as we silently listen to him is the one.

Listening has always been difficult. The Creator in his vision anticipated our problem and designed us with two ears and one mouth. And that same mouth must perform many other functions, lest it find too much time for idle chatter.

I often think many of us have to be a mixture of both Martha and Mary. St Luke's picture of the two sisters of Bethany is consistent with that of St John's gospel, where Martha is the active and practical one who 'served', while Mary sat still in the house and listened. Sarah was inside the tent, keeping cool, away from the heat of the midday.

There has always been a tension between the contemplative and apostolic arms of the Church. The contemplatives are accused of being too focussed on prayer, whereas those engaged in the apostolate are criticised for being too preoccupied with social action and not placing enough emphasis on the interior life. It is hard not to feel some sympathy for Martha, who here embodies the apostolic approach. She has no airs and graces, and is a worker not a shirker.

Clearly both women were serving the Lord, but Mary, in Jesus' own words, was doing it in a better way. That doesn't mean that what Martha was doing wasn't good or noble, or even the right thing: no doubt Jesus and Mary partook of the meal Martha had prepared, and were glad of it. While both activities are essential to Christian living the listening is the greater, as it then spurs us on to do the Lord's work.

It simply means that ultimately sitting at the Lord's feet and learning from him, who is humble and gentle of heart, is the goal of our faith.

We get time for that at Mass, as the Liturgy of the Word is a large chunk of the Mass. There are 168 hours in a week and Sunday Mass is about 1 hour. Not much time out of the week.

We need to make some time for that and also some peace and quiet each day just listening, drinking in what the Lord has to say to us.

Be still and know that I am God.