

Homily based on the readings from October 7, 2025 (Jonah 3.1-10; Luke 10.38-42)

Most people here are probably familiar with the distinction, which comes from today's Gospel reading, between *being a Mary* and *being a Martha*. Not long ago, in fact, I heard about a book group in the area that was reading a work entitled *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*. The point, of course, is that Martha was preoccupied with the physical necessities of service, while Mary took the time to appreciate the presence of Christ in her home. This dynamic has become emblematic of the struggle we all face, between the *practical* demands of our daily lives and the *spiritual* fulfillment we all require.

Regardless of our vocations or states of life, all of us have obligations that occupy a tremendous amount of our time and attention. As I am sure everyone would agree, nobody is more "burdened with much serving" than a parent. Depending on the circumstances, the same can be true for spouses, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and children. Even

people whose lives are primarily devoted to prayer – priests and bishops, religious sisters and brothers – all have substantial responsibilities that simply cannot be ignored.

Even though it may *appear* that Jesus is denigrating the work Martha is performing on his behalf, that is not *actually* what is happening. As is often the case, the choice here is not between bad and good – but between good and better. As we all know, service is an essential component of any Christian’s life – the Son of Man himself “did not come to *be* served but to serve.” The issue is that, amidst our numerous tasks and responsibilities, we must never lose sight of whom we are serving – and for what purpose. Just remember the plain language of the Baltimore Catechism:

God made me to know him, to love him, and to serve him in this world, and to be happy with him forever in heaven.

*To be happy with him forever in heaven.* If that is not our ultimate goal, then nothing *any* of us is doing makes any sense whatsoever.

Our objective is not to stop being a *Martha* in order to become a *Mary*, but instead to *integrate* these two *essential* aspects of the Christian life. Remember the motto of the Benedictine Order: *ora et labora*, prayer and work. One literally cannot exist without the other. Although Scripture does not say much about how Martha grew and developed, we do encounter her again in the Gospel of John – at the death of her brother Lazarus. At that point, it was Martha who went out to meet Jesus, while “Mary sat at home.” It was Martha, not Mary, who looked Jesus in the eye and recognized his true identity:

Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.

As Christians, we are not constrained to be *only* a worker or *only* a worshipper. Instead, we are invited to become a *whole* person, one who fully embodies the model Christ has given us. We must never view our material and spiritual obligations as being in conflict. Instead, we must ask the Lord’s help in transforming the *entirety* of our lives – both our

work and our worship – into one *single* all-encompassing, all-embracing, and all-entrusting *act of love*.