

Scripture Reflection: July. Martha



“Without prayer, work becomes slavery “.
Ian Manhood. St. Joseph’s seminary. Canada.

The sons of Martha toil so that the sons of
Mary might not toil in vain” Kipling

“You are worried and upset about many
things but few things are needed, indeed
only one.”(prayer) Jesus. Luke 10: 41-47

**The feast day of Martha, Mary and Lazarus of
Bethany is on July 29th.**

Jesus at the house of Martha and Mary at Bethany. Vermeer.

Pope Francis dedicated July 29th as a feast day to celebrate three sibling friends of Jesus: Martha, Mary and Lazarus who lived at Bethany. St John’s gospel tells us that Jesus loved Martha, her sister and Lazarus. He and his disciples stayed at their house in Bethany on their journeys from Galilee in the north to Jerusalem in the south of the country. Considering the many events in the life of Jesus, for this group to be mentioned several times in various gospel accounts, means they must have been important in Jesus’ life and have a message for us in the Church today.

St Luke’s gospel passage tells of a visit Jesus and the disciples made to their house. Martha complains to him that Mary is sitting at his feet listening to his teaching like a disciple rather than helping with the hospitality (like a woman’s role should be at the time). Jesus tells her that Mary is doing what’s more important and so the incident ends. From this passage, Martha traditionally has been cast in history as a complaining drudge! She does not have such a good reputation but this is not the whole story of Martha.

What is often overlooked is the role Martha played later. Martha sends word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill and they need him. When the family hear that Jesus is coming it’s too late. Lazarus has died but it’s Martha who runs to meet Jesus hoping he can still help. She has faith in Jesus’ power to heal but she goes even further and says that she knows that God will give him anything he asks for. She knows her brother is dead in the tomb for four days but her faith in Jesus is so great she hopes he can do something! “But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” she says. Jesus tells her that anyone who believes in him will have life and Martha goes on to say that she believes he is the “Messiah the Son of God, who is to come into the world”. Jesus goes on to raise Lazarus from the dead, but this statement of Martha’s is a significant profession of faith; one which only two others in the gospels make, John the Baptist and Peter. Martha is an often overlooked faith hero! The Pope’s residence is called Martha’s House in her honour.

Open our hearts to love you, our ears to hear you and our hands to welcome and serve you in others.