

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 22, 2007

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Our readings for today are not specially chosen for the occasion of the appointment of our new bishop but we can look at them in connection with the appointment of our new bishop.

We see the common theme of the first reading of the Gospel passage today is welcoming God. We see that in the first reading as at least some of the Fathers of the Church say that those 3 angels who appeared to Abraham were really God. Then, in the Gospel passage we see the scene of our Lord being welcomed into Martha & Mary's home. We can ask ourselves then how we welcome our Lord into our hearts. If we really have our attention on welcoming God into our hearts would we be troubled by so many things? We can wonder why Martha did not stop to listen to our Lord in today's Gospel because she had know him and so knew the beauty of his words. Can we say that at times we have been distracted by other interests or preoccupations and so have not been able to notice what our Lord was trying to say to us? Sometimes those distractions and preoccupations can be necessary responsibilities that must be attended to but we are also to notice that our Lord points out that prayer is more important even though the other responsibilities must be attended to.

Our new bishop is an example to us of prayer. Perhaps some of you were able to see him or read what he said on the day of his appointment as our new bishop and so you were able to see his prayerfulness. I was able to attend the prayer service Bishop Zubik held for the priests and deacons of the diocese at St. Paul Seminary on the evening of the announcement of his appointment as our new bishop and at that prayer service Bishop Zubik's had a very prayerful attitude.

Our Gospel passage today helps us to see that prayer is not avoidance of responsibilities. We probably would agree that in the society we live in today someone who would spend a long time in prayer would be looked upon as strange because the attitude of society, we probably would agree, is that people should be on the go attending different events, doing many different things. We might claim that if we had been in Martha's place, we would have stopped to listen to our Lord. We can see what we would have done then by what we do now. If we are sincerely attentively praying in our daily prayer, then we can say we would have been like Mary in today's Gospel when our Lord told her she chose the better part.

The example of Mary in today's Gospel shows the importance of religious orders which are dedicated completely or mostly to prayer. St. Augustine shows that when he says that Mary, in today's Gospel, is the example of contemplative life in the Church. We can keep in mind the help all of us receive from the prayers of those religious communities dedicated to prayer. That will help to impress on us the importance of contemplative vocations. When we are aware of the importance of those contemplative religious orders we are then able to help young people to consider that vocation. When we pray we can remember as well that it is not our own idea to take the time to pray but rather we are accepting God's invitation to pray. God is the one who takes the initiative and we say yes or no to his invitation.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux in speaking about prayer, talks about the fact that sometimes we don't see any difference resulting from our prayer. He says we seem to feel to be the same after we have prayed as we were before. He says that we feel we have prayed in vain. But he says we are to remember two things that our Lord says in the Gospels. First he says we are to remember our Lord says not to judge by appearances and the other is

that our Lord says we are to live by faith. St. Bernard says then we are to put our trust not in what we experience, but rather we are to have faith because our human way of seeing things can be in error. St. Bernard says before our prayer has left our lips, God orders it to be registered in his own book. St. Bernard says we can be confident God will give us what we ask for or will give us what is better for us.

The Gospel passage today fits in with the Gospel passages we have heard the past couple of weeks. A couple of weeks ago we heard our Lord say to be his follower we have to drop everything and follow after him. Bishop Zubik is an example to us of what it means to drop everything and follow after our Lord because as you may have heard him say or imply it was very difficult for him to go to Green Bay but he did it willingly and he loved the people of Green Bay. He said it was hard for him to go to Green Bay because he had to leave his home and so he shows us what it means to drop everything and follow after our Lord. We see that Mary gives us that example in today's Gospel. Today's Gospel fits in as well with last Sunday's Gospel of the Good Samaritan because it helps us see the balance needed between works of charity and taking the time to pray. Not only does that show us that service and prayer are both needed but that they reinforce one another because the more effort we put into prayer, the more willing we will be to help our neighbor and vice versa.

Our second reading today has a verse that might confuse us when St. Paul says he fills up in his own flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. St. Alphonsus Liguori explains that by saying Christ's suffering was entirely sufficient to save all people, but that as St. Thomas Aquinas says for the merits of our Lord's suffering to be applied to us we need to cooperate by patiently bearing the trials God sends us. Pope John Paul II speaking of suffering says it, more than anything else clears the way for the grace which transforms souls. We show by coming to Mass every Sunday and holyday we are like Mary coming to listen to our Lord and we must do that throughout our day.