

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jul 17th 2016

Don't you just love hosting a dinner party?

Your heart is set on serving cedar-planked salmon hot off the grill, but your good friend Rose hates fish. Appetizers? Be careful, because Frank, the life of the party, is now on a gluten-free diet. And when it comes to beverages, everyone has their favorite – diet tonic versus regular, Pepsi versus Coke, and the list goes on...

You fight the traffic and crowds, stopping at three or four different stores to find the ingredients most pleasing to your friends and then wear yourself to a frazzle cleaning your house.

Finally, you stop and ask yourself if entertaining your close friends in your home is really worth the effort. Why am I going to all this time, effort and expense? To show my friends how much I remember about their likes and dislikes, that I am a great cook, or that with \$50 dollars' worth of flowers and eight hours of cleaning, my house looks like it could be on HGTV?

Isn't that the same question Jesus is posing to Martha? Why are you so "burdened with much serving" when "there is need of only one thing"—to be in conversation with me?

Today, as we spend our allotted time in our daily reflection and examination of conscience, we can ask ourselves how much time we spend on our outward appearance and trying to please others, versus the time we spend in daily conversation with Christ, deepening our relationship with him.

How are we balancing the needs of our faith with our emotional, physical and social needs? Are we more like Martha, with our priorities focused on pleasing and serving those around us, or are we more like Mary, focused on our time spent with Christ?

Jesus makes it clear in today's Gospel that the fruits of Martha's labors are temporary – they will be gobbled up by her guests – but what Mary has gained from her time spent with him will last forever. "It will not be taken from her."

We, too, can make the same choice.

We can start today by expanding our time for reflection and conversation with God by 10, 15 or even 20 minutes. We can be more like Mary and less like Martha.

And truth be told, I suspect our dinner guests are more like Jesus than we think. They come to our dinner parties for the conversation and fellowship, and not the food, wine or flowers.

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