

16th Ordinary Sunday
July 21, 2019
“God’s Word in Our Silence”

Gen 18:1-10
Col 1:24-28
Lk 10:38-42

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

Modern Americans are probably the most over-extended people in the history of the world. It seems that almost everyone has too many commitments and activities. In fact, one wonders how they can, truly, do each of them well. Most people walk or jog while listening to something on their mobile device – Many engage in cell-phone conversations while walking as a matter of course. Most parents with young children must, surely, find it daunting to get every child to every activity in which they are involved after school and on weekends! Unfortunately, what almost everyone seems to avoid or abhor is, simply, to be still, relax, and be alone with their thoughts and with God!

St. Luke deals with this exact scenario in the Gospel selection for today. Jesus is a guest of Martha and Mary at the sisters’ home. Jesus is sharing God’s message with the others, including Mary, who are attentively listening. However, Martha is busy trying to put a meal together. Martha is busy with being a good host, but she is resentful of her sister who is not helping.

So she complains to Jesus. With his mild correction, Martha, hopefully, learned a great truth. Yes, hospitality is important. Yes, providing for others is necessary. However, her resentment proves that Martha was not truly centered in God. If she would make time to listen to God, she would learn to do her tasks in the right spirit. For the most important thing is to listen to God first, before we do anything we think is worth doing!

Assuredly, we can’t hear or respond to God’s call, wholeheartedly, if we do not make time to be still and listen. We can do the best things only if we listen attentively to God, instead of running around doing lots of even very good things! As they say: “We need to stop and smell the roses!” We need to discover the presence of God in other things and in other people. Fortunately, if we live to old age, this can happen naturally because we simply can’t do all that we could do when we were young. We must slow down!

Abraham exemplifies this in the passage from the Book of Genesis. Abraham and Sarah were old. They had not yet been given the child that God had promised to them. But as Abraham prayed and reflected, 3 strangers appeared before him. Because he was so attuned to God, Abraham realized that the 3 men were human manifestations of God Himself!

So Abraham welcomed them. He extended Middle Eastern hospitality to them. And he waited for whatever message they had come to deliver. That word was that their long wait was over. A year hence, when the divine visitors returned, Abraham and Sarah would have a newborn son!

In the New Testament reading, St. Paul shares with us some of the insights he garnered from his time in silence and reflection. Somehow, our own suffering fills up what is lacking in the suffering of Jesus Christ for the world! Certainly, the suffering and death of Jesus was more than enough to redeem everyone in the world. However, part of the mystery of salvation is God's plan that we configure ourselves to Jesus himself. We must become like him – which means we must accept our personal pain and suffering as part of our own journey to God.

Therefore, if we suffer with faith and with the right attitude and spirit, we also learn much about life, about God, and about others as well. We can even become an example for others. We can inspire them and help them as they search for God and the meaning of their own suffering.

The patience and good cheer of anyone with faith who suffers becomes a beacon of hope for others in a world that doesn't understand or believe! Moreover, in this whole process, we draw closer to God because we have learned to listen to Him in our hearts and souls!

Finally, the "mystery" of which Paul speaks is "God's divine plan of history" for our salvation. Others can be open to this mystery when they see the peace in our lives and our own openness to God despite what we suffer.

So, let us pray, today, Brothers and Sisters, to be less busy and less frenetic. Let us make the time to be still and to listen. And may God visit us with His special presence and help us understand and accept the task before us.

Amen.

July 21, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra