

16th Ordinary Sunday
July 17, 2022
“Serving by Listening”

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

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

One of the shortcomings of many people today is that they don't really listen to others. We are flooded with so much information, in general, that we are forced to “tune out” most of it to remain sane and balanced.

Unfortunately, this “tuning out” often carries over to someone who is speaking to us, personally. We have our own agenda that we feel is more important. So, instead of listening, we are thinking about what we want to say to them – or about something else altogether! We might even feel imposed upon and want to get back to whatever we were doing beforehand.

However, in every case, we forget that it is another human being who is trying to communicate with us. Moreover, what they are saying is something important to them. They want to share with us – get our opinion or advice – or even our approval or non-approval of something.

Whenever we don't make the time or effort to truly listen to another, then, we are the losers. We failed to be all that we should be – Perhaps, we missed something vital that they were trying to say!

Abraham was amazingly attuned to the voice of God in his heart and in his life. Abraham always listened. God had promised him a son for years and years – but no son was ever conceived or born. Yet, Abraham kept his hope and trust alive. And when God appeared as the three visitors, Abraham recognized, at once, who those visitors were.

Consequently, Abraham did all that he could to make them comfortable and serve them. He met their need for rest, food, and drink. He listened and waited for them to speak. And when God spoke, it was to renew His promise – and it became life-changing for Abraham and Sarah in that moment!

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is at the home of Martha and Mary. Mary is truly listening to the words of Jesus. She sees something of who Jesus is – and understands the importance of his words.

Unfortunately, Martha had her own agenda. Being faithful to the rules of hospitality was more important than anything Jesus had to say. Martha even becomes resentful of her sister. She chides Jesus about Mary's seeming disregard for the obligations of hospitality!

Nevertheless, Mary was more hospitable in what really mattered. She honored the person and the words of Jesus. Jesus had important things to say. What he said, might never be said again – or in the same way. So, Mary truly honored Jesus by listening. And, poor Martha missed what was most important in those moments!

In his Letter to the Colossians, St. Paul gives us the reason we must be attentive to others and what they have to say. It is the mystery revealed in Jesus Christ! For Paul, the meaning of “mystery” is the “divine plan of history”. It is God's plan for humanity's ultimate salvation.

Part of that mystery is that God dwells in each of us and in every person we meet. God continues to work in us and through us. But He also works in and through others – according to their openness and acceptance. Therefore, we must bring the Christ within us to others. We do this by being the best we can be in every encounter. Moreover, we do all that we can to serve the Lord God and Christ within them and in whose image they were created.

Bringing Christ and God to others can be a difficult task. We do this, more often than not, by our behavior – rather than by our words. It means living and modeling Gospel values. For this witness we will suffer just as Jesus suffered. Yet, because we are one with Christ in our suffering – we participate in his suffering. We join our suffering to that of Jesus himself. Thus, we help him in his mission of salvation and love for the world!

Brothers and Sisters, we are, indeed, blessed to be children of God, Our Father, and brothers and sisters to Jesus himself.

Let us pray, today, that we become more like Jesus in every way.
May we always listen to the heart and spirit of those who are speaking to us.
And may we serve all others as Jesus continues to serve us!

Amen.

July 17, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra