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ME: For lots of people, summer is a time to travel.

This past week, my friend Fr. Wallace from Wildwood NJ, came to Bowie.

We've known each other for 40 years, so our visits are easy.

But any time I have a house guest,

I get a little nervous because I want to be a good host.

Before a guest arrives I make a mental list of tasks:

- wash the sheets and towels
- vacuum the guest room
- stock the fridge

And of course, I'm doing all of this in between Masses and meetings and everything else.

It never fails that the day before a guest arrives

I'm running around like crazy getting everything ready.

I have to keep telling myself, "*remember, this is going to be fun!*"

WE: The parish staff will tell you I'm very task-oriented.

That's the nice description for my personality type!

Thankfully, my staff is too.

Every church needs task-oriented people.

It's the only way that vision becomes reality.

But it's not just churches; it's true in any field of life.

To be successful you need organization, structure and discipline.

The challenge is finding a balance between driving towards the goal while enjoying the present moment.

And you need this balance, otherwise the tasks can become a burden and the stress overwhelming.

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We're continuing our summer series titled, The Classics.

In the Gospel reading we heard a great message from Jesus on how to achieve this balance.

Let's get started.

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GOD: The Gospel story of Martha and Mary is a classic.

I've heard it tons of times and so have you.

Because it's so familiar we think we know what it means.

We all know what happened.

Two sisters, Martha and Mary, were having Jesus over for dinner.

I can't imagine having Jesus as a guest!

I'm mentally making a long list of tasks I'd need to do.

Martha stayed in the kitchen while Mary entertained their guest of honor.

From my experience hosting family or friends,
that sounds about right:

some people take care of the tasks and

others make everybody feel at home.

But at some point, Martha got jealous of Mary.

She came out of the kitchen and complained to Jesus

that it wasn't fair that she was doing all the work.

She said, "*tell my sister to help me!*"

And here's what Jesus said:

SCREEN: Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.

There is need of only one thing.

Mary has chosen the better part

and it will not be taken from her.

Now, from what Jesus said most people decide that

Martha was wrong and Mary was right.

Raise your hand if you'd agree with that. (raise hand)

But that's not what Jesus said.

He said: *Mary chose the better part.*

It's always better to have somebody else do all the work.

But the meal doesn't happen unless someone is willing to do the prepping and cooking.

Jesus's point is, don't let the tasks overwhelm you, otherwise you'll lose sight of what the meal is all about - you'll stop enjoying yourself and make everyone around you miserable.

And if Jesus is over for dinner, don't get angry and drag him into a family argument!

With this classic story, Jesus is teaching his followers how to be true disciples.

He's telling us that we need to balance the tasks of life; the busyness of home, school, work, family and friends, while keeping our eyes firmly fixed on him.

Without that balance, life will become overwhelming leaving little time for the Lord.

So it's not a question of being a Martha **OR** a Mary - a taskmaster or a 'people person'.

Followers of Jesus have to be both: it's Martha **AND** Mary.

But the *better part*, the first priority in life, has to be God.

I commend Martha for bringing her worries and cares to Jesus.

If she hadn't, she'd have never heard his message on putting God first.

And if she hadn't, we wouldn't have Jesus's message.

Martha didn't get exactly what she wanted.

Jesus didn't order Mary into the kitchen.

Instead, Martha got exactly what she needed:

a reminder from the Lord on what must come first in life.

Do you ever wonder what happened next in the story?

I like to think that after Jesus spoke his peace,

Martha took off her apron and sat at Jesus' feet **AND**,

Mary got up and went into the kitchen to finish preparing dinner.

Both learned something valuable from this encounter.

When we find the balance between tasks and faith,

we become like Mary and we appreciate Martha.

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YOU: I know some of you are looking at your life right now

and feel like Martha -

you are anxious and worried about many things.

You're busy all the time,

going from sun up to sun down every day.

Or maybe you're feeling that life's problems have robbed your joy.

You're easily agitated, grumpy and joyless.

If you're dealing with any of this, please hear

Jesus's words to Martha and Mary: **choose the better part.**

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So let me suggest a few ways you can do this, right now.

How about coming to pray on Thursdays during our silent adoration?

It begins at 9:30am and goes until 12:30pm.

The church is quiet and peaceful, the lights are dimmed,

and Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, is present on the altar.

Come and give your cares and worries to God;

pour them out, and know the Lord is listening.

Other churches in our area also offer adoration

and a quiet place to pray;

you can probably find one near work or where you are traveling.

Another suggestion is to create some silence when you are commuting; either to work or school or on your way to the store or gym, maybe while doing housework or yard work.

Our tendency is to fill our lives with noise, but using some of this time for silence allows you to clear your head.

And you create a space for God to speak.

How about turning off the TV or your devices for a few minutes each day and take some time to read scripture?

If you don't have a bible handy, it's easy to find scripture online.

When you read scripture you are literally doing what Mary did in the Gospel today: you are sitting with the Lord and hearing God speak.

If you don't know what to read in the bible,

I recommend the Gospels and the Psalms.

So adoration, quiet time, and reading scripture.

What I like about these options is they encourage you to live in the moment; putting all your tasks on hold for a little while and making God your number one priority.

The busyness can wait; the distractions will always be there.

Try one of these things and I can guarantee you will grow in faith, you'll be deepening your relationship with God and imitating Martha and Mary.

And for those of you who identify more with Mary than Martha and have a little or a lot of extra time either because you're recently retired, or facing that 'empty nest' at home,

God may be calling you to take on some new tasks.

Why not get involved in a ministry or organization here at St. Pius?

There are dozens to choose from.

Every parish needs Marthas and Marys.

So this week let us hear God say to us,

I am here, closer than you can ever know.

Spend some time with me, and I will fill you with calm and peace.

Amen. +