

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: 18 July, 2010

Perhaps the more cynical among us think that life is nothing more than making a series of choices between good or evil. When they make the right choice they feel "good" and all is right with the Lord and with the world. When they make a wrong choice they feel "bad" and thus see themselves deserving scorn or punishment. And if they observe others making wrong choices they are quick to chastise them with their own personal self-righteous exclamation: "How could they do such a thing."

Oh, if life were only that easy. If only things were clearly right or wrong, good or evil, things would be so much easier. For most of us, if not all of us, we want to do the "right" thing and avoid continuing to add harm to an already broken world. But, as we continue to live out your lives, we discover that all of our choices are not so "black or white" for there seems to be a lot of "gray" mixed in. Now, in reality, most of our choices in life involve making choices between "goods" and not between good and evil. Now, permit me to rephrase that last sentence in another manner. Most of our choices involve choosing between two or more things, which have some degree of "good" associated with them. Our problem arises when we don't choose the "highest" good and neither did Martha. That's St. Martha, whose feast day we will celebrate a week from now. Remember, Jesus' admonishment to her:

"Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part..."

Mary chose something good, but so did Martha. However, Mary chose the higher good in this situation and Jesus affirmed her choice. Martha's choice; however, did not make her bad, evil or unloveable. Actually, her choice seems to have made her anxious and worried, while Mary seems to be at peace. Perhaps, there is something that we can gain from this story.

In each of their cases, Mary and Martha sought to accomplish something that they viewed as "good". However, Martha chose the "lesser" part and Mary chose the "higher" part, which in this case was God. Now let's consider ourselves by means of this analogy. When we choose the "lesser" part we don't hurt God, we only hurt ourselves and those around us. Like Martha, we fail to experience joy and peace because we choose a lesser "good".

Now, let's examine four (4) situations that could have proved fateful if the people involved had chosen the "lesser" good: 1). Abraham could have stayed put rather than venturing off to a new land, 2). Moses could have continued to tend to his family and flocks rather than returning to Egypt on a seemingly impossible mission, 3). The Apostles could have looked at Jesus and said: "You want us to do what?" and 4). Jesus could have taken a different fork in the road rather than beginning his journey up out of the Jordan Valley and on toward Jerusalem.

And what can we gather from all of this? Well, I will offer the following: the "best" part is always out there waiting to be chosen and by choosing God in all that we do... we can experience a peace that only God can give.