

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle C

The gospel today brings a smile to my face for a number of reasons. I'll share one of those reasons, and hope that my wife won't be too upset with me afterward.

My wife has a brother Jim who lives in Columbus with his wife Ronnie. He taught landscape architecture at THE Ohio State University for well over 25 years.

Needless to say, he and his wife are huge Buckeye fans.

Every year he throws an Ohio State/Michigan party at his house for family and close friends. My wife and I usually drive down Friday afternoon to beat the traffic, and to help with all the preparations for the party.

For some unknown reason, this particular party a few years ago was causing Jim undue stress and anxiety. His motives were pure, as he wanted his guests to have the best of everything to eat and drink.

MJ and I watched in shock and amazement as he mixed up a batch of macaroni salad that could've fed everyone at the party, and most of the people sitting in the Horseshoe, at Ohio State Stadium.

He stressed out over the minutest of details, like the color of the cups and napkins. As the guests arrived and the game began, he fretted over whether there was enough ice or food or desserts.

In his desire to be a good host, which he was, he missed out on much of what was most important; enjoying time with family and friends. Oh, and watching Ohio State once again crush Michigan. That's important too.

I wanted to say to him; Jim, Jim, there is much you are anxious and worried about. But let's be honest, we're all guilty of that from time to time.

But before we sum up today's gospel with, we should be like Mary and not Martha, let me give something else to consider. I believe that Jesus wants us to be both Mary and Martha. The best of Mary and Martha. Let me try and explain what I mean.

I was on vacation a week ago and my wife asked me if I wanted to go to the drive-in movie in Norwalk, with her, two of our daughters, and four of our grandchildren.

The movie was Toy Story 3. I said, "I'll pass. Thank you for asking."
Now the real reason I passed was because at 9 o'clock that night, an overpaid entertainer was announcing his decision, on whether he was staying in Cleveland, or moving on to greener pastures.

I missed out on being with my family, and apparently from what I heard, a pretty good movie, because I was anxious and worried about what a guy who gets way too much money, to put a ball in a basket, may or may not do. That's an example of being the worst of what Martha represents. And I'm guilty as charged.

And now to Mary. I've been trying hard lately to improve my prayer life. So for the last two weeks I've tried to set aside some alone time with just me and God. I start out thanking Him for all the good things he has blessed me and my family with. Then my mind drifts to my worries about my family, my job, oh, and that guy that left Cleveland to join another team. I just can't seem to stay focused, because I allow the anxieties of life to creep in. That's an example of being the worst of what Mary represents.

My friends, in the end, we should not view the contemplative Mary and the active Martha, as being conflicting in nature. Think of them both as being complimentary aspects of true discipleship. Martha and Mary represent an important part of following Jesus; but both are necessary.

A life of service without attention to Jesus and his Word, will end up being frustrating and empty. While a life full of prayer and study of Scripture alone, can be equally unfulfilling.

Jesus wants us to be both Martha and Mary. The best of Martha and the best of Mary. It's not always easy, but if we listen first, then act, it is possible.