

The 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 16 & 17, 2016

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All Saints Parish, Syr. NY

My Dear Brothers and Sisters. I very much believe that we should treasure the story of Jesus, Martha, and Mary, we just heard today. And that for the very simple reason that if we listen to the words of Jesus, and follow through, we find ourselves in God's loving and life-giving presence.

Let us for a moment think and pray about what took place on that late afternoon.

Jesus visited Martha and Mary. I do not know how many other people were there but, nonetheless, this act of Jesus was an act of healing justice, not supported by the customs and the Law in the culture of a male dominated society.

IN this healing act of justice, Jesus gave primary importance to satisfy pastoral need, over observing even a very important aspect of the Law of the Old Covenant, the law of hospitality. In the letter to the Hebrews in chapter 13 we read: *Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.* But we have an even more powerful support of hospitality in the first reading of today from the book of Genesis. The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, *'If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed.'*

So, according to the law and tradition, it does not seem to be right that Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to him speak, while Martha was left alone to do all the serving of hospitality. The words of Martha mirror very much the known value of the custom according to the Law when she said: *'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.'* But Jesus replied, *'Martha, 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.'* Jesus did not say that the Law is not important, but that to satisfy people's pastoral need is more important, and that this relationship of values of law and pastoral need provides the one true act of justice. After all, that is why Jesus healed on the Sabbath.

Do we find a resonance of all this in the words and deeds of Pope Francis? Very much so. My dear Sisters and Brothers, let us think and pray about all this. And let us also remember, when Jesus was baptized the sky opened and the voice was heard: *'This is my beloved Son, listen to Him.'* Let us listen to Jesus, and live and love what we hear. Amen.