

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Growing up in a dysfunctional or emotionally unpredictable home often forced us into roles that were never meant for children—caretaker, fixer, peacemaker, or scapegoat. We learned early on that love and safety were conditional and that staying alert and busy might keep the chaos at bay. As adults, these coping mechanisms remain with us. We become master multitaskers, people-pleasers, or chronic avoiders. Recovery teaches us a new way to live—one that balances action with contemplation and finds rest not in achievement, but in connection with God.

This Sunday's Gospel offers a poignant image for our recovery. Jesus enters the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha. While Mary sits at Jesus' feet, absorbed in His presence, Martha becomes overwhelmed by the tasks of hospitality. Frustrated, she complains (Luke 10:40–42):

*“Lord, do you not care
that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?
Tell her to help me.”
The Lord said to her in reply,
“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.”*

Many adult children of dysfunctional homes resonate with Martha's anxiety. We often feel alone, abandoned in our responsibilities, burdened by a belief that if we don't hold everything together, everything will fall apart. Martha's plea—“Lord, do you not care?”—could easily be our own. But Jesus doesn't scold her. He names her worry and offers a different way: “There is need of only one thing.”

Recovery invites us to consider what that “one thing” is in our own lives. Before we rush into activity, we are invited to sit still—to rest in God's love, to listen for His voice, and to let go of the illusion that we must earn our worth.

As adult children, we may struggle with overachievement or perfectionism. These are attempts to secure love we were never freely given. But Jesus calls us to a better way—not rooted in proving ourselves, but in knowing ourselves as beloved. We hear this echoed in the Big Book's description of spiritual discernment (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 86):

“In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.”

This posture—relaxing, not struggling—is the opposite of how many of us were raised. But it is essential to healing. As we sit in God’s presence and listen through prayer, Scripture, and fellowship, we begin to untangle who we are from what we do. Slowly, we become more grounded, more attuned, and more whole.

The second reading adds a profound insight from St. Paul (Colossians 1:24):

Brothers and sisters:

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake,
and in my flesh I am filling up
what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ*

Our story, our wounds, and even our past suffering can be redeemed. When we are honest about our history and allow others to witness our journey, we become agents of healing. We do not need to hide or pretend. Our lived experience—especially our struggles—can help others feel less alone.

Ultimately, recovery is about reordering our lives so that God becomes the center, not the dysfunction of our past or the chaos of our present. We no longer have to live in a perpetual state of vigilance. We can rest, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus. And in that rest, we find clarity, peace, and purpose.

Reflection Questions

- How do you recognize Martha-like patterns in your life—especially related to worry, control, or over-responsibility?
- What does it mean for you to choose the “better part” in your recovery journey?
- How can you allow your story to become a source of healing for others still burdened by their past?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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