

THE EMMAUS SERIES

16th Sunday Year C

Genesis 18:1-10

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to him

We know from John's gospel that Martha and Mary were friends of Jesus, and that he was frequently in their home. Luke tells us nothing of this; perhaps it was not in the material available to him. However, he immortalises this incident that took place during one of Jesus' visits, because he sees it as having a lesson for us all. Busy preparing special dishes for their guest, Martha feels left out. Jesus tells her not to go to so much trouble: one dish will be plenty. He then goes beyond this homely advice to remind Martha and those present that the 'one thing necessary' in life is finding the truth he is bringing them. Mary does not need to be reminded of this; she shows herself to be a true 'disciple'.

In the gospel accounts, 'disciples' are mentioned hundreds of times. For many centuries, however, the idea of 'discipleship' has had little place in our Christian awareness. Today, we are being told that our lives will be enriched, if we see ourselves as disciples of the Lord. 'Disciples' are learners. All inspiring leaders gather around them a group who want to share in their vision. Those who followed Jesus and were inspired by his message were called 'disciples'; even those who had not known Jesus during his earthly life called themselves his 'disciples' - as we know from the Acts of the Apostles. By including this incident in his gospel, Luke is inviting us to become disciples of the Lord by identifying with Mary as she sat at his feet – finding the truth that gives meaning to our lives.

If we develop the outlook of disciples it will become second nature to us to recognise that we are never alone in our moments of faith awareness and prayer – 'Come to me', the Lord tells us, 'I am with you always'. He encourages us as we seek the way, to share our lives with him with honesty and courage, to look honestly, in his presence, at the quality of our relationships, at the responsibilities life has brought us, at our hopes and ambitions – comparing our outlook with that of the guest who told Martha that one dish was enough. The light and encouragement this attitude of discipleship brings will surprise us. It will make our personal prayer more meaningful. The strength and inspiration we find will make us more aware of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

How do we know the mind of Jesus, what he stands for? The Scriptures should play an important part in our life of discipleship. Listening to the gospel story, we must be prepared to meet the real Jesus and be challenged by the example of his attitudes. Knowing the Scriptures will help us to situate our lives in the great plan of God – spoken of in today's readings. We are the beneficiaries of all that is foreshadowed in the promises made to Abraham. We should learn to share Paul's amazement and gratitude at the generous plan, hidden from all eternity and now revealed in Christ.

John Thornhill sm