

Sunday Message

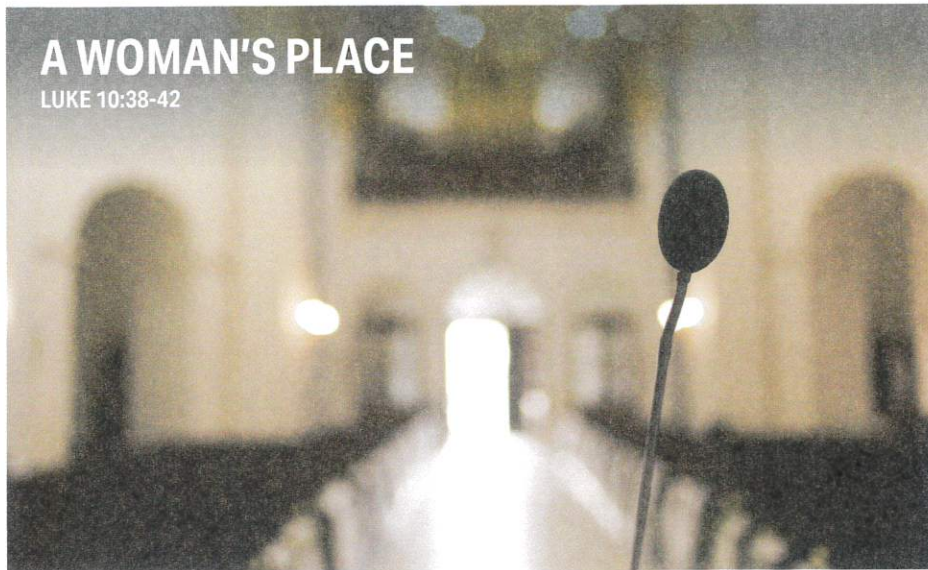
16TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 20 July 2025 • Psalter Week 4

A WOMAN'S PLACE

LUKE 10:38-42



Some years ago, a laywoman was invited to lead the singing at a big annual novena in a Redemptorist church. It meant that at one or more of the sessions each day she would climb into the pulpit and lead the congregational singing. She is an excellent singer and leads the congregation superbly.

But there was a problem. Some of those attending the novena were not happy with this development and phoned the monastery to express their displeasure. Redemptorist priests and brothers had traditionally led the singing at this event, and that's how these people wanted it to remain. They didn't want a layperson – and certainly not a woman – filling that role.

A woman leading the congregation in song at a Eucharist or novena isn't new or radical, but when something as minor as this can be such a big deal for some Catholics, it shows just how sensitive is the whole issue of women in ministry in the Church.

It's something that is explored in today's Gospel story of the sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha is the organiser. She bustles around preparing a meal for their guests. Feeding at least thirteen men with big appetites after a day on the road would set a challenge to the best housekeeper. There is no doubting her frustration when she looks around for her sister to give her a hand and finds she is sitting among the men instead.

In her frustration, Martha does something that could be considered bad manners. She involves the guest of honour in a family dispute. Jesus' reply is intended to appease her. Note the repetition of her name and the praise of her bustling around.

Some experts interpret Jesus' statement that Mary has chosen the better part as praise for the value of the contemplative life of prayer over the active life.

Another view is that the story reflects the situation of women both in the life of Jesus and in the early Church. The key to it is in the first words we hear about Mary, who "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching". Sitting at the feet of a teacher was a way of becoming a disciple of a rabbi. Mary, like other women followers of Jesus, has chosen to become a disciple, and the first duty of a disciple is to learn from the teacher, to sit at his feet.

This story is telling us that Jesus welcomed the discipleship of women. He didn't send them off to the kitchen or expect them to stay in their place apart from the male disciples. Luke may have included it in his Gospel as a reminder that the place of women in the Church should not be confined to making and serving meals. Like the men, they are called first and foremost to be disciples, to sit at the feet of the Lord and to listen to the Word. This is the better part, and it mustn't be taken from them. ■

REFLECT

Today's Gospel challenges us – and the Church – to think about the role of women.

Women hold many ministries in the Church – catechists, teachers, parish sisters, liturgists, musicians, singers, readers, servers, Eucharistic ministers, theologians, students of theology – but many still feel as if they are relegated to the kitchen while men make all the big decisions. They feel like modern Marthas. The Catholic Church is a male-dominated institution, and it is extremely difficult for women – and indeed for laymen – to have any real say in it or exercise any real authority. That will always be the case as long as power is bound up with ordination rather than with baptism.

As you reflect on today's Gospel, recall the women whose discipleship of Christ has made your discipleship possible. How might our Church make the best use of the gifts and talents of its female members? ■

SAY

"Lord, help me to take the time to listen attentively to you. Amen."

DO

Look at your work/life balance, your daily routine. Are you working too hard? Are you too busy? Do you allow for what is important in life? Reflect also on your treatment of others. Is it fair?

LEARN

As disciples of Jesus, we must strive for the quiet, listening attentiveness of the student. We need time and stillness to read and ponder the scriptures, to pray and reflect on the direction in which our lives are going. We also need the energy to work for the kingdom of God, whether it is in our professional life or in the generosity of offering our time and talents for the sake of our neighbour. In other words, we need to be both Martha and Mary.

PRAY

Ask the Lord to help you find a deeper awareness of the needs of those around you.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*See, I have God for my help.
The Lord sustains my soul.
I will sacrifice to you with willing heart,
and praise your name, O Lord, for it is good.*

COLLECT

Show favour, O Lord, to your servants
and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace,
that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity,
they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Genesis 18:1-10a

A reading from the Book of Genesis.

In those days: The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, 'O Lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on – since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quick! Three measures of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes.' And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk, and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'She is in the tent.' The LORD said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 15(14):2-3a. 3b-4b. 5. R.1a

R: O LORD, who may abide in your tent?

1. Whoever walks without fault;
who does what is righteous,
and speaks the truth from his heart;
whoever does not slander with his tongue. **R.**
2. Who does no wrong to a neighbour,
who casts no slur on a friend,
who looks with scorn on the wicked,
but honours those who fear the LORD. **R.**
3. Who lends no money at interest,
and accepts no bribes against the innocent.
Such a one shall never be shaken. **R.**

SECOND READING Colossians 1:24-28

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body – that is, the Church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known – the mystery hidden for ages and generations, but now revealed to his saints.

To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL cf. Luke 8:15

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are those who hold fast to the word of God
in an honest and good heart,
and bear fruit with patience.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 10:38-42

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.' But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who in the one perfect sacrifice brought to completion varied offerings of the law, accept, we pray, this sacrifice from your faithful servants and make it holy, as you blessed the gifts of Abel, so that what each has offered to the honour of your majesty may benefit the salvation of all.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*The Lord, the gracious, the merciful,
has made a memorial of his wonders;
he gives food to those who fear him.*

Or

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock, says the Lord.
If anyone hears my voice and opens the door to me,
I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord, and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.