

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading *Luke 10:38-42*

Jesus visits the house of Martha and Mary. Reflection on the Gospel Reading

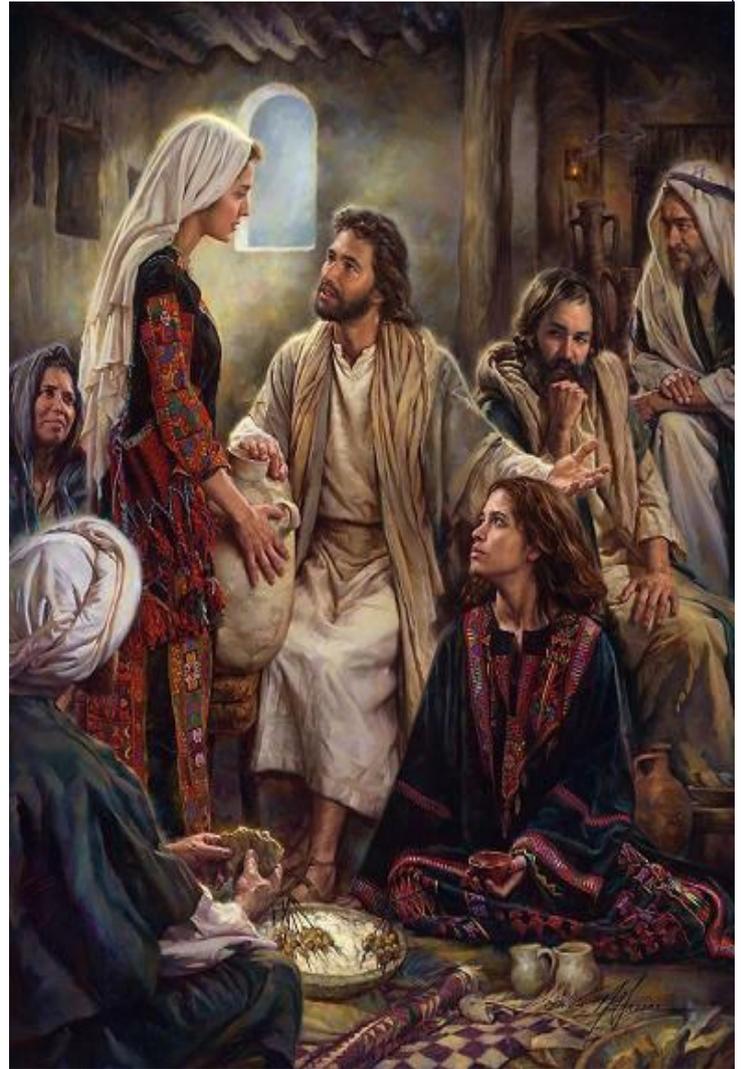
The story of Jesus in the home of Martha and Mary complements the story of the Good Samaritan, which immediately precedes it in Luke's Gospel. Both stories are unique to Luke. The story of the Samaritan opens with the words "a certain man." Today's reading opens with the words "a certain woman." The Samaritan is an example of how a disciple should see and act. Mary is an example of how a disciple should listen. Mary, a woman, is a marginalized person in society, like the Samaritan. Both do what is not expected of them.

As a woman, Mary would be expected, like Martha, to prepare hospitality for a guest. Here again Jesus breaks with the social conventions of his time. Just as a Samaritan would not be a model for neighbourliness, so a woman would not sit with the men around the feet of a teacher.

Both stories exemplify how a disciple is to fulfill the dual command which begins chapter 10—love of God (Mary) and love of neighbour (the Samaritan). These are the two essentials of life in the kingdom. By using the examples of a Samaritan and a woman, however, Jesus is saying something more. Social codes and boundaries were strict in Jesus' time.

Yet to love God with all one's heart and one's neighbour requires breaking those rules. The Kingdom of God is a society without distinctions and boundaries between its members. It is a society that requires times for seeing and doing and also times for listening and learning at the feet of a teacher.

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