

In today's Gospel, we encounter the familiar story of Martha and Mary. We learn that Martha is very concerned with details of hospitality, while Mary gives her full attention to the Lord on His visit. She puts aside things to concentrate on the person of Jesus. She was rewarded for choosing the better part. Both are admirable qualities, but one was ultimately more important.

I have for many years been challenged by the story of Martha and Mary, perhaps because I so identify with Martha. I find myself a bit defensive on that count, aware that Jesus said that Mary chose the better part. Yet, I think that without some Martha's, a lot less would get done in the world.

At the same time, without Mary's, we would easily fall prey to the mentality that we are valued for what we do, even what we do for others. As important as that may be, our Catholic faith calls us to a personal relationship with the Lord and that requires time in prayer.

Good works alone are not enough. I recall when Mother Teresa was being interviewed about her community's daily life and the fact that after all the work they do in the streets amongst the poor, she was asked how do they still managed to spend two hours each day in prayer. Her reply was quite simple saying that without the two hours of prayer each day, they would never be able to go into the streets at all. They would dry up and fizzle out. The prayer nourished the works and had to be seen as the life blood.

Today's readings in fact give each of us permission to see the necessity of both an active and a contemplative side to our overall spiritual health. The fullness of the faith may be lived out with

different emphases to be sure.

Early on the morning of July 23, 1816, a group of twelve young men made their way up 800 steps leading to an ancient shrine in Lyons, France. For more than a year, they had shared intense conversations about a major project they had been encouraging each other to bring to fruition: the foundation of a Religious Congregation totally devoted to Mary, Mother of God.

They perceived that it would be symbolically a counterpart and practically parallel to the Society of Jesus, but, as a Congregation, uniquely suited to “these times” because they were discerning that Mary was calling for this. It would take some time for formal recognition, but that came in 1836, and this Archdiocese has been blessed by the presence of the Marists ever since 1886, when Archbishop Ireland invited them to minister in this diocese.

The Marists have a missionary component including 18 priests who serve in Brazil. It is the world’s largest Catholic country, but suffers from a lack of priests. They are very represented in Oceania, and in fact a good deal of their seminarians hail from that region of the world. The Marists have made a lasting contribution to the Church in Oceania, in places such as New Caledonia and Samoa.

From the Society of Mary's inception, the vision was for an order that would include everyone: priests, sisters, brothers, lay men and women. Today, the Marist family includes the Marist Brothers of the Schools, Marist Sisters, Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, the Society of Mary (Fathers and Brothers), and lay Marists – Marist Laity, Marist Associates, and the Third Order of Mary. I encourage you to support the missions in our second collection today, taken after Communion. The first is for parish stewardship.