

July 17, 2022 – Contemplation or Action (16th Sunday in Ordinary Time)
Gospel of Luke 10:38-42
Fr. John

The incident when Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary poses the classic question whether faith requires action or contemplation.

The simple answer of course is that it requires both.

In practice however, when we deal with specific situations and human personalities it may not be so simple.

Emotionally we may side with Martha, who is left with all the kitchen work while her sister Mary sits seemingly idle, listening to Jesus.

Furthermore, we may not understand why Jesus appears to reproach Martha for her complaints about being left with all the kitchen preparations. Wasn't that unfair?

Yet, if Mary left to assist Martha, would that not be a breach in hospitality?

Perhaps Martha's busyness with practical issues is a prime reminder that our day-to-day activities often become an end in themselves and distract us from the bigger issues that life presents.

Somehow we need to bring action and contemplation into balance if we are to have a healthy spiritual life.

As the wise teacher in the Old Testament book Ecclesiastes stated: "*There is an appointed time for everything. And a time for every purpose under heaven.*"

As last Sunday's gospel pointed out the Good Samaritan acted when faced with an emergency situation. On this occasion it was important that Mary listen and absorb the teachings of Jesus.

St. Paul says something in today's second reading that seems somewhat puzzling and may be even sound heretical: "*In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ.*"

How could anything be lacking in the sufferings of Christ we might ask.

The answer is **us**. Our part in response to what Christ has done for us. Christ's mission remains incomplete until we respond to it – both in listening to his Word and then acting upon it.

Thus, both **action** and **contemplation** are necessary in responding to Christ.

There indeed is a time to prayerfully listen as Mary did and there is also a time when we are called into action like that of the Good Samaritan.

It is up to you and me to decide when and where these are necessary in our spiritual life.