

Jesus Christ has been given a name that is above all others, and as Paul reminds us in our second reading he is the image of the living God, that Jesus was with Almighty God before anything else was....That nothing exists without him and everything exists because of him and for him, including us, and that ultimately our only purpose in life is to come to the knowledge of all that he has done for us and want us to be and in humility to simply accept it, because we sure can't earn it, and to be in his presence and enjoy it.

I'll close with a poem, the author of which is unknown...

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day!
I had so much to accomplish that I didn't take time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task.
"Why doesn't God help me?" I wondered, He answered, "You didn't ask!"
I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock. God gently and lovingly chided, "Why, child, you didn't knock!" I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, grey and bleak.
I wondered why God didn't show me. He answered me, "But you didn't seek." I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day.
I had so much to accomplish, that I had to take time to pray.

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work.... Tell her to help me....Martha, Martha you are worried and distracted by many things, there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken from her".

May we never foolishly allow our Lord, the one who is here, whose Spirit is with us to be a blank figure in our crowded lives, but rather to sit at his feet while he is here.

Amen

Trinity 5 - 21.7.19 Fr. Grant Cohen 'The Lord is here'
Colossians 1:15-28 / Luke 10:38-end

I was checking on my Facebook on Friday to see what new things had been posted by my friends only to see this "it's only 159 days to Christmas! Oh no I thought and I've not even bought my turkey!!! What a ridiculous thought and yet it won't be long before the Christmas cards are in the supermarket along with a whole aisle devoted to Christmas tree goodies. I'm sure that most of you haven't even given a thought to Christmas, but as soon as the summer holidays are over, I shall have to, well the church element of it anyway. Life gets busy and we often get distracted...

As a priest there are certain things which we are meant to prioritise in our lives....so to name a few...the daily office of morning and evening prayer, time spent reading and reflecting upon the scriptures, and not just for writing a sermon. Time on retreat, and I don't mean a holiday, but time spent on being alone with God just because we need to and want to. I didn't have anything on one morning last week and not having taken a day off the week before I decided to sleep in. The trouble was I woke up really early but instead of getting up and finding something to do I decided to just lay there with my cup of tea and reflect over stuff that had been going on over the last few months, and as I thought it came to me that one of the things that has really irritated me about myself over the last few months is the amount of times I have said I'm tired, when I'm asked how I am...maybe its irritated you to hear it!but you know every time I say it a voice in my mind says to me, 'Well whose fault is that'because I owe it to myself and to others to give more time to doing what's life giving and less to what takes it away and I don't think I'm not the only one who needs to hear that at times....

It's a case of prioritising the right things in our lives no matter how others perceive or question it, because it is our life and we to ought to take care of it.

A magazine told the story of a woman in northern Greece who was traveling on a bus with her child. Apparently, she was so deep in conversation on her mobile that when the driver of the bus reached her stop, the woman got off leaving her 4-month-old son behind.

Fortunately, she quickly realised her mistake and got a taxi to chase the bus back to the terminal, and the baby was still where she had left him 30 minutes before.... crying, but OK.

As we hear this story we might think 'what a stupid woman, or what a horrible mother', or we might be a bit more honest and think "It could happen to anyone."

This woman was distracted from something that was very important, but we all face the temptation daily to turn our attention from what should matter to us the most.

Today's gospel reading sets the scene where Jesus goes to the home of Mary and Martha, it's clear that this isn't their first meeting and we know that they become very close. What sticks out though on this occasion is Martha's comments about her sister.

"Lord don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself". I can imagine Mary feeling quite awkward as everyone looks at her, possibly agreeing with Martha that she should be up and serving, and then wondering how Jesus will handle the situation.

But rather than telling her to help out, which is what we would probably do, Jesus asks Martha to reflect on her own priorities.

Martha was hosting God in her home and she had a unique opportunity to create a special memory that she could have cherished in her heart for the rest of her life but what should have been a happy moment, became a day of worry and anxiety.

In 2016, 61 million prescriptions were issued for anti-anxiety medications at a cost of over 266 million pounds, and in the states more than 1 in 5 people take them at any one time.

For many people they are a lifeline towards a normal life, and I speak as someone who has great compassion on those who suffer with anxiety having struggled with it myself for the better part of my life.

Yet, the Royal college of psychiatrists while endorsing their use also say that where possible alternative therapies such as meditation and simple talking to someone should be explored and I know that for myself that both work at reducing levels of worry.

So here is Martha on the verge of doubling her Prozac because Jesus is in the lounge and she's got too much to do, while Mary is just sitting at Jesus' feet taking in the fact that God is in the front room.

But the reality was that Jesus hadn't asked for a big meal in his honour, he hadn't asked for a tidy house, he hadn't asked for all the busying around him, he just wanted their company and so Martha's anxiety was the product of her own choices.

I wonder what we really think when at the beginning of the Eucharist we hear the words.... 'The Lord is here...' Do we really believe it?

All of us know what it means to reach our physical limits.

Thanks to the Martha's in our own lives we feel the pressure to do the best, be the best even at the cost of our own well-being - and I believe me I am listening to my own words as much as I'm inviting you too.

We often try to live up to the unrealistic expectations that we have built up in our mind, where we over extend ourselves, over commit ourselves and over work ourselves rather than just sitting back like Mary and enjoying the moment that the Lord is here, that his Spirit is with us...

...my sister has left me to do the work says Martha,

And reading this we assume that Mary did nothing to help at all....

But Martha implies that at some time Mary was helping her, but she left Martha in the kitchen...

Before his arrival Mary had most probably been right there with Martha in the kitchen when suddenly knowing God was in living room, she prioritised him over the potatoes.

Martha on the other hand was so consumed with what she had to do that she seemed to forget who she was doing it for.

In 2007, a bowl was bought at a garage sale. But in 2013 it was discovered that the bowl was from the Northern Song Dynasty and was over a thousand years old. Until they realised what they had the family had the bowl stuck on the mantel piece over the fireplace but when they placed the bowl for sale at Sotheby's Auction, it was estimated to sell for about \$200,000. Instead a dealer from London paid more than two million.

Why would the first owners sell something so valuable for just \$3?

The answer is...they didn't appreciate what it was worth.

Jesus responds to Martha in a way that would have annoyed me and maybe it did her too

"Mary has chosen what is better..." ouch!!!

Sometimes we need to hear that our priorities are out of sync, that we don't value what's most important.

Jesus didn't demand that Martha join Mary at his feet, he didn't even ask her if she wanted to, he just reminded her and now us that its we who prioritise the things that are most important to us but that some are better than others.

Adolph Menzel created a painting called Frederick the Great's Address to His Generals Before the Battle of Leuthen.

Menzel worked on the painting from 1859-1861, but he never finished it.

The huge canvas contains the background and the generals standing in a semi-circle, but the main figure of Frederick the Great is left blank.

Menzel's famous painting is a picture of many people lives.

The background of career, interests, and achievement is complete. The faces of significant people like family, friends and colleagues surround. But the central and most important figure is missing