

Don't Worry

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

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There is a lot for us to worry about in life. Even when we do make progress in finding peace, there is always something else that comes up to make us worry again.

Martha, in our Gospel today, was a worrier. When Jesus visited her home, she immediately went into hostess mode. Everything had to be perfect for Jesus, so much so that Jesus' visit became a burden to her. After trying to guilt trip her sister, Mary, into helping with the serving, Jesus finally confronted her. He said, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken away from her."

While we give Martha credit for being hospitable and welcoming to Jesus, she may have crossed the line between serving and controlling. Serving is a good thing that we are called to do as Christians. But serving can all too easily turn into controlling. Whenever we become controlling, we try to fit everything into our own standards of how we think things should be. We force reality to conform to us. This may make us feel important, but in reality we are only adding to our worries and anxieties because controlling reality is impossible.

Today's Gospel gives us an alternative. While Martha was running around trying to control the scene, Mary did the exact opposite. She simply sat at the feet of Jesus. In those times, 'sitting at the feet of someone' was a sign of submitting to their authority and being their disciple. By sitting at Jesus' feet, Mary was demonstrating that she had no

desire to control the situation, like her sister, but only to learn from Jesus. As a result, Mary was not worried, anxious, or burdened. She certainly chose the better part.

Whenever we find ourselves anxious about many things, it is usually because we are trying too hard to control everything. In these moments, I've always found the little saying from Padre Pio, the Franciscan priest and saint, helpful: 'Pray, hope, and don't worry.' This is a good reminder to all of us that while we have to do our own little part (pray and hope), God is in charge (so don't worry). It is not our job to worry about everything. We are simply disciples sitting at the feet of Jesus.

The more we think we are in control, the more our worrying will increase.

Am I too much like Martha and not enough like Mary?

The next time we find ourselves anxious and worried about many things, let us think about the story of Martha and Mary. Martha put too much pressure on herself and tried too hard to control everything. Mary, on the other hand, gave up control and took the posture of a disciple. In the end, Jesus credits Mary for knowing the one thing necessary: God is in control.