

**HOMILY – 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C), by Fr. Robin CRM.**

**Readings: Genesis 18:1–10a | Colossians 1:24–28 | Luke 10:38–42**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's readings bring us into the intimacy of the home—Abraham's tent, and the house of Martha and Mary. In both places, the Lord visits, and both hosts respond with generous hospitality. But the way each encounter unfolds invites us deeper into the mystery of *how* we are to welcome God—not just into our homes, but into our hearts.

The first reading presents a mysterious theophany: the Lord appears to Abraham in the form of three visitors under the oak of Mamre. The Fathers of the Church saw this as a profound image of the Trinity. St. Augustine writes in *De Trinitate*, “The three men were not three gods but a manifestation of the one God in three persons” (Book II, ch. 11). Abraham's posture is striking—he runs to meet them, bows low, and offers water, food, and rest. In return, he receives the promise of life: “your wife Sarah shall have a son.”

What we see here is that hospitality to God always brings blessing, often beyond what we can imagine. Abraham welcomed strangers, but in truth, he was welcoming God. As the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us: “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it*” (Heb 13:2).

The Gospel continues this theme of divine visitation. Jesus enters the home of Martha and Mary. Martha, like Abraham, is busy serving. Mary, however, sits at Jesus' feet, listening. And when Martha complains, Jesus replies gently, “*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things. One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.*”

At first glance, this may seem like a criticism of Martha's service. But Jesus is not condemning service—He Himself came to serve. Rather, He is redirecting her from distraction to attention, from activity to presence. St. Ambrose says, “Virtue does not consist in labour but in discretion. Mary chose to be still and listen, because devotion begins with hearing the Word” (*Exposition of Luke* 7.85). Mary's posture is the classic one of a disciple—“sitting at the feet”—a phrase Luke also uses of Paul learning from Gamaliel.

The Greek verb used for “listening” is *ēkouen*, a continuous imperfect—it implies Mary kept on listening, drinking in Jesus’ words. The early Church saw Mary as a model of contemplation. St. Gregory the Great reminds us, “Martha received the Lord as a guest, but Mary was receiving Him within, in the heart” (*Homilies on the Gospels* 33)

In the second reading, Paul reveals the heart of Christian hope: “the mystery hidden for ages... now revealed to his saints... Christ in you, the hope of glory.” This “mystery,” Paul says, is not merely a doctrine but a person: Christ Himself, dwelling within.

Paul adds something remarkable—he is “*rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake... filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.*” This does not mean Christ’s sufferings were insufficient. Rather, as St. John Chrysostom explains, “Paul does not mean that the Cross was incomplete, but that the sufferings of the Body, the Church, are ongoing until the end of time” (*Homilies on Colossians*, 4). When we suffer for others with love, we participate in Christ’s redemptive mission.

So, in Mary who listens, and in Paul who suffers, we find two responses to Christ: interior devotion and sacrificial mission. Both are necessary. But priority is given to *being with Christ* before *working for Christ*.

Let us now draw the threads together.

Abraham teaches us generous hospitality to God. Mary teaches us contemplative attentiveness. Paul teaches us how to carry Christ within us—even through suffering—for the sake of others.

Too often, we are like Martha: busy with many things, even good things. But we risk losing the “one thing necessary.” Before we preach, we must listen. Before we serve, we must pray. St. Bernard of Clairvaux put it beautifully: “The one who is wise will become a reservoir, not a channel. A channel lets the water flow away. A reservoir waits to be filled and then gives out its overflow” (*Sermon 18 on the Song of Songs*).

How do we become reservoirs? By daily prayer—not as a task, but as an encounter. By sitting with Scripture, letting it speak. By silent adoration, where we say nothing, but let Christ look upon us with love.

And like Abraham, we must open our tents. We live in a time of spiritual famine. Many are seeking rest, meaning, hope. Can they find in our homes, our parish, our lives a space where Christ is welcomed?

### **Conclusion**

Dear friends, today the Lord comes again—not under an oak tree or into a Bethany home, but into your life and mine. May we welcome Him with reverent hospitality, listen to Him with Mary's heart, and serve Him with Paul's joy—even in suffering. Then we too shall hear: *"This is the better part... and it will not be taken away."*

Amen