

Companions IN PRAYER



Sisters of St. Clare
Saginaw, MI

Jesus' meeting with Martha and Mary

Last month I was at a meeting of Poor Clare nuns from the Eastern and Midwestern states. These meetings are opportunities for me to see friends and meet new people coming into the Order. Meetings with large groups of people, especially with those I do not know well, are not easy for me. I am used to a life of quiet prayer and am by nature an introvert. However, if I manage to have one conversation with a sister when we share joys and problems of our lives and discuss the present challenges that we face, I find the meeting a very good experience.

In the Gospel account of Mary, Martha and Jesus (LK 10:38-42) we see an example of that personal sharing that means so much in our lives. I understand better why Jesus wanted Martha to give up her busy activities and join Mary and him in their time together.

The passage describes Jesus going to visit Martha and Mary in their home as though they were close friends. This Gospel story doesn't tell us how they met each other. Perhaps they heard Jesus preaching and were very drawn to his message. And Jesus, as evident in this story, trusted the sisters and became friends with them — so much so that he sought them out to visit with them.

When Jesus arrives, Martha does the hospitable things of getting her guest something to eat and drink in order to make him feel welcome. But the story takes an interesting turn. Martha asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her get things together for him. Jesus replies, "Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. . . ."

I know this concern of Martha in my own life. I can hear myself asking friends, "Do you want this or that?" until

finally they say, "Just sit down and listen to me, and tell me your thoughts."

Jesus' remark is often seen as a rebuke to Martha. However, we can also read it as Jesus' desire to have Martha put aside the formalities of hospitality and come and listen to what He has to say. I hear an urgency in

Jesus words and wonder what Jesus wanted to talk to them about. It leaves me wishing that I could have been part of the conversation with Jesus, Martha and Mary.

That is often the way when we visit friends; we want them to be with us immediately. We want to share news and look forward to their attentive presence. Their friendship is a special gift in our lives.

As I ponder this Scripture, I wonder, "Have I trusted Jesus when I pray? Have I shared my deepest life experiences with Him? And like Martha and Mary, have I stopped to listen when I feel the presence of the Lord in my life?"

Like Martha, I want Jesus to make my life easier by changing someone else's behavior not mine. At other times, when I am willing to sit at the feet of the Lord and listen, I become aware of changes I need to make in my own attitude and behavior. Often I need to change my hopes and desires in order to welcome God's kingdom.

Our Poor Clare community life is at one of those periodic points of change. We are aging and find that we cannot do as many activities as we did when we were younger. This year we decided to no longer make Christmas cards. In the past I have always chosen the designs and



Christ in the House of Mary and Martha
Johannes Vermeer

organized the printing, advertising, packaging and mailing of the cards. I rebelled against these changes; it is taking some time for me to adjust and move forward with other plans.

When I found myself praying, "Jesus, tell the other sisters to try harder," I felt like Martha. I did not want to see us let go of some of our activities.

Then one of our sisters had a stroke, and I found myself sitting at the Lord's feet where I cried for my sister and our future. Slowly, I began to quiet down enough to listen. As I became quiet and attentive, I was able to trust God. A calm presence settled within me.

Since we have given up some of our previous activities, we have time to be with our sister as she slowly recovers. And by caring for our sister, we understand more intimately people's need when they call us for prayers. As we went through our own pain, we heard more clearly the pain of others, and, I believe, were able to reach out to them with even deeper heart-felt empathy. When

we assured them that we would pray with them and for them, we were drawing them into the circle of all those who sit at Jesus' feet and seek help.

In hindsight, I can see Jesus is leading us in very subtle and simple ways. We knew we could not continue the work we were doing. We trust what we hear when we ask the Lord for his direction in our changing lives.

We are all invited into friendship with Jesus in the same way as Martha and Mary. We are invited to lay aside our busy activities and attend to Jesus' presence; he wants our attention. Let us take the time, like Martha and Mary, to listen for God's guidance and welcome God's presence in our lives.

(We are interested in your thoughts. Let us know at: <http://srsclare.com/about-us/companions-in-prayer-newsletter>)

Sr. Laura and Sisters

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Changing activities

In my previous reflection on the Martha and Mary Gospel, I mentioned that our life as Poor Clare sisters is changing. We will no longer create Christmas cards, although we still have our Blessing Oil, sympathy cards, and clinging cross at our **Gift Store** on our website, <http://srsclare.com/our-gift-store/gift-store>.

This change in activity is giving us more time to pray for the many needs of our world. We invite you to join us for two times of contemplative or quiet prayer at our house. One prayer time is on the second Sunday of every month from 2-3 pm; the other is on the fourth Monday of the month from 7-7:30 pm. You are welcome to meet with us as we gather in a circle of prayer with Jesus.

Or join us in spirit by reading our Sunday Journal by Fr. Kelly on our website: <http://srsclare.com/practice-of-prayer/sunday-journal> and spend some time in quiet with the Sunday scriptures.

Saint Clare Day

We live on a busy main street that has several schools along the road. Around the beginning of August there is a noticeable decline in traffic. It's as if people are intentionally slowing down to savor the last few days of summer before the fall school schedules begin. We find ourselves in a similar quieter mood. On August 11th we celebrate our founder, Saint Clare, with a day of prayer and reflection in her honor. This year we also celebrate our 25th year in the Saginaw Diocese. In gratitude for the many friends, blessings, and support we have received, we always remember you in our daily prayers. Please keep us in your prayers as well.

We wish you this blessing of Saint Clare:

*"May God always be with you,
and may you always be with God."*

St. Clare of Assisi

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You are not alone
WE ARE PRAYING WITH AND FOR YOU.