**THURSDAY JULY 29 – XVII WEEK O.T. [B]**

**SAINT MARTHA**

**"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 from her."**

**Jesus is on a journey to Jerusalem. He enters a village and he is welcomed by a woman called Martha. We are in Bethany and we are in the house of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Mary, Martha’s sister, sits beside Jesus at his feet and listens to his word. For Mary the world stops. It does no longer exist. Jesus and his Word exist for her. Mary wants to put every Word of Jesus in the heart and for this reason she does not let herself be distracted by any other thing. Jesus speaks and she listens. She listens and Jesus speaks.**

**Instead, Martha lets herself be distracted by much serving. It is important to make a good impression with such a sublime host and nothing must be left out, nothing omitted, nothing done in a superficial way. At a certain moment, she sees herself burdened with much serving to be completed. She comes and reproaches Jesus: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." You, Lord, know everything. You know how much I am busy and occupied. Why do you not tell my sister to come and help me, then? If you do not tell it to her, then it is sign that you do not care about me at all. Surely, it is not a fair that I am tiring and you do not care and act as if I were at your feet, too. Martha is closed into her world, in the world of her preparations. She does not see anything else. She does not understand anything else. She does not care about anything else. She does not even see Jesus as Jesus at this moment. She sees him as someone who does not care about her tiredness. My sister will not listen to me, if I tell her. Instead, if you tell it to her, for sure she will come to help me. Not only does she reproach Him. She reproaches him and she wants to use him for her particular aim. Not only does she reproach him, but she also suggests Jesus what is fairer for him to do.**

**Jesus, with endless love, with supreme sweetness, says to her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things.” This is the history of man: a continuous anxiety and worrying for many things that are useless most of the time. Uselessness is the work of man’s life. The anxiety is his salary. Worrying is its unique reward. Ecclesiastes says that man works for vanity. Vanity is of the rich, of the poor, of the wise, of the foolish, of the erudite, of the ignorant, of the overbearing, of the evil, of the one who is at the top and at the bottom, of the king and of the servant. Vanity is won in one only way: observing the Commandments, the Holy Law of God. This is the real concreteness. It is the concreteness winning every illusion, deceit, vanity, chasing the wind. Here is the other concreteness. One can chase the illusion of science, of wisdom, of doctrine, of richness itself, but always remaining in the concreteness of the observance of Commandments.**

**Let us read the text of Lk 10,38-42**

**As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "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 from her."**

**The Commandments are the good field, the rock upon which we must build our vain earthly existence, as well. The full existence is the eternal one. Ecclesiastes is not a pessimistic, he is a concrete man. He sees man as he made himself. He sees him wrapped in vanity. The vanity that will accompany him for all the days of his life, all our daily existence on earth, how can we bring it into truth? The answer of Ecclesiastes is true wisdom: bringing it only and always into the will of God. It is the observed will of God that frees man from vanity and introduces him into the truth of life and things, of time and of history, of the before and the after, of the present and of the eternal future. The world is conquered by vanity: vanity of wars, vanity of military and political blocks, vanity of luxury, vanity of sin, vanity of vice, vanity of gambling, vanity of everything man starts on earth. Vanity of thought and philosophies, vanity of economic and financial systems. Everything is vanity as, almost all things man does, he does them as a foolish and unwise man. Everyone can run after his vanities, at the condition that he remains anchored to the observance of the Commandments. Everything reported in the Commandments can be done. It is a licit, holy vanity. Everything that is out of Commandments is an illicit, sinful vanity. Eliminating, each of us, the illicit and sinful vanities, one can give a powerful turning point to the resolution of the matter of the truth of this world’s things. And, then, people say that Ecclesiastes is pessimistic. He is the Anti-serpent by excellence in the Old Testament. He is the teacher teaching us how to overcome all the vanities to which our life after the sin of Eve and Adam is subject. Jesus brings this teaching to fulfilment. He brings the life of man into his eternal truth. What is fulfilment of the will of the Father is true for man. What is not in the will of the Father is vanity, deceit, anxiety and worry.**

**How can one know the will of the Father? One attentively listens to Jesus. Jesus is the Revealer of the will of the Father, of his truth, of his love. One knows what the Father knows and one fulfils it. Martha has been conquered by the vanity of the world and of the things. Mary, on the contrary, decided to escape this vanity, not to let herself be tempted by it. What does she do? She sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to Him. Only the Word of God frees us from the vanity. The Word of God must be heard, meditated, read, read again, contemplated. One must dedicate the right time to the Word of God. With no time given to the Word of God, our life might never escape the vanity. Vanity does not say that things are not good. The things we do can even be excellent. But they are all useless. In the vanity one works for nothing. One chases the wind. One is anxious and worries for nothing, for the nothingness, for what is not for one’s benefit. The active life must always be ruled by contemplation, by listening, by the perfect knowledge of the will of God. Jesus does not separate the active life from the contemplative life. He wants the active life to be contemplative, too, and the contemplative life to become active. This unity can be lived in one only way: if one sits at his feet and listens to the Will of his Father from his mouth.**

**Martha is not the active life. Mary is not the contemplative life. The Gospel knows a double way. For the Gospel the active life must be contemplative and the contemplative life must be active. Jesus teaches Martha a great truth: how can one serve Jesus if one does not know how Jesus wants to be served? How can one serve God if one does not listen how God wants to be served? Firstly, one listens, then one prays, finally one fulfils what was head with the force we have gained with the prayer. Just doing is useless to the Lord. For the Lord, doing, that is most pure obedience, is useful.**

**Thus, Jesus teaches us that we must place the right order in the things and in the relationships. If life has to be obedience, in order to obey, one needs to listen. If one never listens, one might never obey. If life is love, for love, one needs to know in what the other one wants to be loved. If one never listens, we might never love according to truth and justice. Mary listens and she can love Jesus according to truth. Martha does not listen and she might never love Jesus in fullness of holiness. Whoever obeys does not do useless things. Whoever does not obey fills his entire life with uselessness. Mary teaches us that before obeying one must always listen, before loving one must be in the listening of Jesus. Instead, Martha is the woman of action without listening and without contemplation. She is the woman of anxiety and of the pursuit of things to do. Mother of God, help us. We want to be true listeners of Christ Jesus.**