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“You are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing” (Luke 10:41).

Gal 1:13-24; Luke 10:38-42

What is the one thing needed? Today’s readings point to the same thing. For St. Paul at his conversion and for Mary of Bethany, the one thing needed is to know Jesus.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul describes how he came to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. More intimate and accurate than the accounts in Acts recorded decades later by Luke, Paul describes the moment when he realized he had been chosen from his mother’s womb and set apart to know Jesus as the Son of God. His transformation is not instantaneous. It takes three years for him to absorb the full implications of this encounter, another 14 years before he meets with the Jerusalem church to begin his mission to the Gentiles. But Paul insists that he does not need human approval, for his apostleship comes directly from Jesus. He knows Jesus.

The story of Jesus’ visit to the house of Martha and Mary in Bethany focuses on another transformative encounter that authorizes another significant apostle. Mary also knows Jesus. When Martha tries to pull her from the group of disciples listening to Jesus, he defends her place among them. The meal is important, but the heart of the hospitality Martha is anxious to provide is not the food on the table but the Word of God that has come to her house. Mary understands this, and she gives Jesus her undivided attention. He is the one thing necessary.

The Word of God comes to our house today. The voice of Jesus meets us right where we are when he says, “You are anxious and worried about many things.” We are facing three serious crises: a deadly pandemic with no end in sight; an economic crisis threatening global stability; a political crisis that has divided the country and threatened its institutions. Anxiety, whether active or suppressed, is distorting our ability to respond collectively and with hope. Mass media and social networks keep us both informed and misinformed, united and scattered. Where can we turn to find context and direction for our anxieties and worries?

Faith is another name for tuning our minds and hearts to God’s Word and Spirit. This 24/7 source of guidance and inspiration only requires us to focus on the risen Christ, who is present among us, fully in touch with our human plight and fully aware of “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” These opening words of Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* take on renewed significance in concert with the latest letter of Pope Francis to the world. The pope’s letter offers a sober assessment of the many crises the human community is now facing and a path forward filled with promise and hope. Consider making this your meditation today.

http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.pdf

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