Spirituality
Scripture for Life
Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



(Teresa Malcolm)



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"Anything worth doing is worth overdoing." That's what a friend told me years ago. There's something to that.

We so often live with an outlook of scarcity: "America first," "If they win, we lose," "they will take our jobs" and most of all, "We don't have enough for ..."

What happened to divine extravagance?

Abraham, a Middle Easterner, knew the importance of hospitality. If people of the desert do not help one another, everyone is in danger of death. So one day while Abraham was enjoying an afternoon snooze, he spotted three strangers. He tells Sarah, his wife, to get 50 pounds of flour and make some bread. He chose a steer, generally over 1,100 pounds, to offer his guests "a little food."

That abundance demonstrated his respect for the visitors — as well as his generosity, importance and wealth. The most famous depiction of the scene is the icon written by Andrei Rublev which focuses on the relationship among the trio who are enjoying being nourished by one another more than their meal.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 20, 2025

Genesis 18:1-10a
Psalm 15
Colossians 1:24-28
Luke 10:38-42

Now to New Testament hospitality.

Luke tells us that as Jesus entered a village, Martha invited him to the home she shared with her sister, Mary. That a woman would invite a man into her home was rather unusual — there's no mention of a husband or brother to legitimize the presence of a male guest. From there, things continue to progress ever more

curiously.

Martha, the original hostess, gets busy like Sarah, preparing everything necessary to receive an honored guest. She mirrored Father Abraham's copious generosity, assuming the tasks of service (*diakonia*) while her sister, like a rabbi in training, sat at Jesus' feet.

While Mary may not have noticed, Martha was only too aware of the contrast between them. Bold soul that she was, she chided Jesus himself, calling him to notice her efforts and even telling him what he should say to Mary.

What a pair! One who sees all that others need, another absorbed in Jesus' message. We might think of 1 Corinthians 12 where Paul talks about the necessity of different gifts to fill out the body of Christ. Deacon Martha must have been an expert at multitasking as she found the food, cooked, prepared a table and arranged it all as it should be.

Note that Jesus doesn't criticize Martha's efforts. Instead, he sympathizes with her, he sees that she's driving herself crazy trying to be sure that everything is just so. His response is not a put-down, it's an invitation.

It's as if he were saying, "We all want to make things perfect, and it's impossible. God's creation is in process, just like your meal, which will satisfy us even without three Michelin stars. Give yourself a break. Enjoy the 'why' of all you are doing."

Regarding Mary, in literal translation, Jesus says, "Mary has chosen a good part and it will not be taken from her."

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Jesus doesn't compare the sisters or raise one above the other. Jesus says that they do not need to confine themselves to specific roles. Mary has chosen a good part. Like Martha who stepped beyond her culture's gender-defining restrictions to invite Jesus into the house, Mary trespassed the boundaries of the "proper" vocation of women.

What we end up with is not a comparison between active and contemplative life, but a multifaceted breaking of barriers and limits. Martha expanded the boundaries of

family, and received Jesus as a brother, making their home his own. Although we never hear that the apostles sat at Jesus' feet to learn, Mary gave them the example of being a disciple, a learner.

Although the subjects of this Gospel are women, we shouldn't limit its message by interpreting it solely in terms of the equal dignity and potential of women and men. This story invites all of us to reassess "acceptable" boundaries and arbitrary restrictions. Pope Francis' call to synodality urged us to hear everyone equally: lay or cleric, physician or garbage collector, indifferent to gender, education, nationality, language or political preference.

When Jesus called people to discipleship, he paid attention to their potential, not their status. Our call is to receive Jesus and his message as extravagantly as Martha and Mary did. Jesus ignored impediments that limited others. We too can live the Gospel with abandon, certain that it's worth doing and that God will never run out of possibilities for us.

There's more abundance in and around us than we will ever be able to appreciate. Let's live with divine extravagance!