

# Including women was 'radical'

## THE GOOD NEWS

GOD'S WORD IN EVERYDAY LIVING

By Father Paul Turner



**I**'VE GOT SOMETHING important to tell you." If someone you love says those words your hair will stand on end. But without that warning, we may miss how important the next sentence will be, or we'll reel from it, unprepared.

Next Sunday we'll hear one of Jesus' most memorable instructions about prayer. He prepares us for it this Sunday with a vignette which announces how important the next teaching will be.

The story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42) nestles between the Good Samaritan and the Lord's Prayer. In the Good Samaritan, Jesus told us to get up and do something. In the story of Martha, he tells us to sit down and listen. Once he states the importance of contemplation, he teaches us how to pray (Luke 11:1-13).

Martha is the main character of this story. It's her home Jesus enters, she who greets him, she who prepares the house -- and she who complains about her sister. Mary never says a word.

Mary, however, has assumed the position of a disciple. She sits at Jesus' feet and listens to what he says. Simple as this may sound, we should not miss how radical this was. Rabbis at the time did not admit women to their circle of disciples. Yet Jesus enters a woman's home, and instructs another woman while he is there. The episode calls to mind another incident (Luke 8:1-3), where we learn that many women numbered themselves among the disciples and benefactors of Jesus.

**T**HE TWO WOMEN characterize the active and contemplative life. Martha busies herself with household tasks. Mary, oblivious, focuses her attention on Jesus. Both demeanors befit the Christian. At the Last Supper, Jesus himself will take on Martha's role. But here Jesus seems bent on teaching contemplation. Busy as we can get, faithful Christians value their time at the feet of their master.

Perhaps Luke's original readers were themselves people of action -- disciples who laudably labored long service, but perilously neglected the inner spiri-

tual life. A similar tension drives the story of how deacons came to be (Acts 6:2). The demands of waiting tables obstructed the word of God, so deacons assumed some of those tasks for the community's spiritual leaders.

Jesus extends this teaching while instructing women. In doing so, he shows that it applies to every one of us. He also made the community rethink its tendency to keep women away from some areas of discipleship.

Time with Jesus is important, today's Gospel proclaims. Next Sunday tells us what to do with it.

The Lord's Prayer is just that, a prayer taught by the Lord Jesus himself. It comes to us as an instruction, at the request of disciples. Throughout Luke's Gospel Jesus frequently seeks prayer, especially before important events in his ministry. Apparently this behavior so impressed the disciples that they wanted to learn it as well. So Jesus teaches how he prays. For this reason, the Lord's Prayer remains the most cherished prayer in Christianity. It inspires the final section of the Catholic catechism, Catechisms receive it during Lent to prepare themselves for Baptism and the Christian life.

**Y**OU MAY NOTICE that this isn't the same Lord's Prayer you use. The Gospels give us two versions -- one in Matthew, the other in Luke. Matthew's version (6:9-13) is the one we follow at Mass and which you probably learned as a child. Luke's is shorter. To our embarrassment, scholars believe that Luke's version is probably more authentic since it's more likely that Matthew added a few lines than it is that Luke subtracted them. So even though this version may not be as familiar to you, you're probably closer to the words of Jesus when you use it.

Unburdened by the extra petitions, Luke's prayer brings us directly into the kingdom. It prays for bread which will nourish us on the last day. It begs forgiveness so we will be prepared for the final judgment. It projects us into anticipating the end of our lives, and guides us like a beacon on our journey home.

The parable which concludes next Sunday's Gospel assures us that God welcomes our prayer. We don't have to convince God. A friend may give in to us if we shamelessly ask a favor over and over again. A parent will offer good care to a child. But God's love outdoes them all.

These passages invite us into the spiritual life, show us how to stay there, and assure us that what we find will be love.

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### Daily Scripture Readings

**Sixteenth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time  
Sunday, July 23**  
Genesis 18:1-10a  
Psalms 15:2-5  
Colossians 1:24-28  
Luke 10:38-42

**Monday, July 24**  
Exodus 14:5-18  
(Ps) Exodus 15:1-5  
Matthew 12:38-42

**Tuesday, July 25**  
2 Corinthians 4:7-15  
Psalms 126:1-6  
Matthew 20:20-28

**Wednesday, July 26**  
Exodus 16:1-5, 9-15  
Psalms 78:18-19, 23-28  
Matthew 13:1-9

**Thursday, July 27**  
Exodus 19:1-2, 9-11, 16-20b  
(Ps) Daniel 3:52-56  
Matthew 13:10-17

**Friday, July 28**  
Exodus 20:1-17  
Psalms 19:8-11  
Matthew 13:18-23

**Saturday, July 29**  
Exodus 24:3-8  
Psalms 50:1-2, 5-6, 14-15  
John 11:19-27

**Seventeenth Sunday  
in Ordinary Time  
Sunday, July 30**  
Genesis 18:20-32  
Psalms 138:1-3, 6-8  
Colossians 2:12-14  
Luke 11:1-13

**Monday, July 31**  
Exodus 32:15-24, 30-34  
Psalms 106:19-23  
Matthew 13:31-35

**Tuesday, August 1**  
Exodus 33:7-11; 34:5b-9, 28  
Psalms 103:6-13  
Matthew 13:36-43

**Wednesday, August 2**  
Exodus 34:29-35  
Psalms 99:5-7, 9  
Matthew 13:44-46

**Thursday, August 3**  
Exodus 40:16-21, 34-38  
Psalms 84:3-6, 8-11  
Matthew 13:47-53

**Friday, August 4**  
Leviticus 23:1, 4-11, 15-16,  
27, 34b-37  
Psalms 81:3-6, 10-11  
Matthew 13:54-58

**Saturday, August 5**  
Leviticus 25:1, 8-17  
Psalms 67:2-3, 5, 7-8  
Matthew 14:1-12

**Transfiguration of the Lord  
Sunday, August 6**  
Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14  
Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 9  
2 Peter 1:16-19  
Luke 9:28b-36