

The Better Part Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, July 29, 2017 8:15 AM
Ex 24:3-8; **Jn 11:19-27** **St. Martha** (That's what Mary is doing here: getting to know personally who God is, being revealed of course through Jesus, the embodiment of the Word of God.)

“Tell her to help me.”

This resounds in the ears of many people. My mother didn't like this gospel; she thought Martha was getting a raw deal, so many people might think that. Martha is overworked; Mary is doing nothing, not exactly. **“Mary,” Jesus says, “took the better part.” Well, what is that all about?**

It's really about the work of getting to know God. As St. Teresa of Avila points out, we cannot get to know God without getting to know ourselves; and likewise, we cannot get to know ourselves without getting to know God because we are made in the image and likeness of God. **So when we get to know God, we get to know ourselves; but without getting to know God, we can't know who we are. We know something false, something we invent. The work of contemplation is truly work, and it's the better part in this story.** It's the part people rarely even see a need for, and this is part of the great tragedy of life on earth that at a very early age we develop an identity drawn from the life that any one-year-old or two-year-old or three-year-old could have and that becomes who we are. **And all the problems of life we try to deal with through the eyes and through the understanding of that imaginary being.**

Even our life of faith can be part of that imaginary being if by faith we simply mean things we believe, rather than some one that we've got to know. **That's what Mary is doing here: getting to know personally who God is, being revealed of course through Jesus, the embodiment of the Word of God.** So she is not simply being a hostess listening to the guest; that would be one level of looking at this, but it's much deeper. She's getting to know God. **And in getting to know God she is getting to know who she really is.** And that's the better part because Martha is still living out of her sense of housewife, homebody. So this gospel is written for all of us that **we might also choose the better part.**