

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C) Homily
Saint William, Champion | July 17, 2022
Gn 18:1-10a | Col 1:24-28 | Lk 10:38-42

Deacon Robert Mintus

Is there anybody here who doesn't like to take a vacation? I think that for most people, it is nearly a necessity. We are in the peak time for vacations now in July. A study a number of years ago found the nearly half of the people they surveyed took vacation time during the month of July. And we have different ways of spending our vacation time – maybe it's a shopping spree, or a golfing vacation, or a sightseeing trip, or going camping.

When I was young, we spent many summers in the Pocono mountains in Pennsylvania – now not in the place with the heart shaped bathtubs, but in a rustic setting in the woods, where there were about thirty cabins around the perimeter of a quiet 75-acre lake. Our favorite spot was an A-frame, about 75 feet away from our dock, where we had a couple of rowboats. We would get up each day around 6 am and go out to fish, then come in for breakfast, then head down to the beach, come back for dinner around 4, go back on the lake for more fishing, come in after dark for a good night's sleep, and repeat the next day..

But one year, my family decided to change things up a bit. Instead of our usual trip to the Poconos, we did a lot of sightseeing. We went across the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive, and made stops at Luray Caverns, Monticello, Cherokee, NC, Gatlinburg, TN, and Blackwater Falls, WV, among them. The funniest part, though, was when my brother asked the question: “When are we getting to our vacation?”

Looking back, I realize that my brother had stumbled onto something. For him, vacation was being at a place, a home away from home. Living out of a suitcase in a motel just wasn’t it for him.

This weekend, we hear of two stories of travel and hospitality. Our first reading tells us of Abraham extending hospitality to three passersby, who are later revealed to be angels with a message from God. And Abraham’s generosity prompts him to provide these men with a large meal. He quickly asks his wife Sarah to get a half-bushel of flour and prepare bread and has a servant prepare one of his calves, and gets cheese curds to give them a good meal. The three visitors reward him for his hospitality by promising him a wonderful thing... that he and his wife will have an heir when they return the following year. And their promise is so good that Sarah cannot believe it – in

fact she laughs it off, because she and Abraham are well past child bearing age and have given up on their dream of having a family.

That theme of hospitality is repeated again in our Gospel, but in a different way. Jesus visits Mary and Martha, and Martha is the one who is all wrapped up with the details of waiting on Jesus. But we are surprised to see Jesus scold Martha and rewards Mary for showing him true hospitality... because Mary pays attention to Jesus while Martha is preoccupied by the busy-ness of attending to Jesus's needs. And Jesus goes so far to say that Mary has chosen the better part.

For me, this Gospel story has always been a challenge to understand, especially in light of the first reading that precedes it... So how are we to live our lives? Don't we need Christians who are serving others? As a permanent deacon – whose name, derived from the Greek word that literally means service – it seems a little difficult to take.

But I think that today's readings remind us that both ways of showing hospitality – by providing the needs of others like Abraham, and being present to God like Mary – are important in our lives. Our Church needs both. It needs us to look after the needs of others around us and extend the love of God to

them through Christian service, but it needs us to focus on being present to Jesus and staying connected to the vine, the one that we are called to be branches of.

Our Gospel today reminds us of the necessity of both roles in our Church. Maybe today, we can better understand why we need men and women in monasteries and convents who are working in the role of Mary, being present to Jesus, and those who work as Marthas, taking physical care of their brothers and sisters.

And I think that today reminds us of the risk of getting detached from Jesus and the importance of allowing Him to speak to us in our lives. I think that for many of us, despite the fact that we are required only to spend about an hour at mass each week, sometimes our lives get so busy that we are like Martha when we get here... We're so preoccupied by what is going on in our lives outside of mass that we get in here and are unable to allow Jesus to be present to us in that hour. Maybe we're thinking of what we have to do after mass or our plans after mass... I know that is one thing I consider when I am part of our folk group... am I getting so wrapped up in playing that I'm not giving Jesus the attention He deserves?

And if we look at the life of Jesus, we can say that He worked hard in His ministry – but there were still those times in which he went off by Himself to rest and be refreshed by God.

So, I think that today is a reminder to let our outside cares and activities go on hold as we spend time with our Lord and our family of faith in our celebration of the Eucharist. Trust me, no matter how important we are and what we are doing is, those cares can wait for an hour. They will still be there waiting for us when we reach the parking lot. Let's make the most of our time that we are spending here by being like Mary and allowing ourselves to be fully present to Jesus today. Maybe today, we can allow ourselves to take a short "vacation" from everything that gets in our way, if only for the hour or so we spend together. Let us not only work hard and play hard, but also pray hard.