

THE SWEET GOODNESS AND SIMPLICITY OF HOSPITALITY

I saw a picture of two nephews on vacation this week standing at the barbecue grill down the shore each under an umbrella but cooking away nonetheless. It served as a simple reminder of how much a part of our lives food actually plays. Every day. All our lives. Even on vacation. Especially on vacation. Today's first reading has Abraham and Sarah offering hospitality to some strangers. Ultimately, out of this simple act of kindness and sharing food, a new life will come. Sarah will give birth to her son, Isaac, and God, finally, will begin the process of carrying out the promise he had made to them almost twenty-five years before. And they were in their seventies then. It made me ask the question about how long I would wait for the Lord to fulfill a promise I know he had made to me? Would I wait twenty-five years?

And so I ask myself: why does God wait and not act instantly? Is there something else at work? Something else the Lord seeks to accomplish in me by waiting? Am I not ready for what he desires to give? Is my own ordinary way of thinking sometimes standing in the way of the Lord's working in my life?

In the gospel for today we are so familiar and we recognize that it is our yearly moment to beat up on good old Martha. Funny thing is I find that there is a lot of Martha in me. I have been here at Saint Anthony's for 28 years. I have preached about 1500 homilies on Sundays and Holy Days. Another 8500 daily homilies, 500 wedding homilies and about 1000 funeral homilies. Probably between 11,000 and 12,000 homilies in that time. If I were a homemaker and providing my family a cooked meal each day for those 28 years it would be more than 10,000 meals. So my preaching is like a spiritual meal on a daily basis.

You may think that by this time that my preaching is easy or that it just comes readily to me and does not really take much doing to put together something worthwhile or helpful. But in my own estimation it is different. Each week I begin my asking the Lord not to give me something to say to you but rather I ask what he is trying to communicate to me. What is his word from these readings to my heart? And once I have a sense of that then I know I will be given what I need to bring that simple truth or that single message to you in a way you can understand and relate to.

But in preparation of my homily I am like Martha, anxious and worried about many things. Even though I have decades of experience of how the Lord has provided for me will it continue? Will I listen for what the Lord wants said? Martha was too aware of how much was depending on her—at least in her own mind. I get that way too sometimes. You may also. In many ways we think that a lot of things in life depend on me and if I don't do them, they will not get done or done well. But the Lord is trying to get us to see beyond this very obvious observation. Even if everything doesn't get done, or done just right, the world goes on. We adjust and we cope and the beat goes on. Trust Him is what He asks.

It is what he asked of Abraham and Sarah too. Trust him even if He is delayed in responding. Trust him anyway. Abraham was promised that his offspring would be like the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore. That's a lot of stars and sand. Do you know how much he himself actually lived to see? One child. Is seeing just a little bit going to be enough for us? Has the Lord fed you in all the thousands of homilies you have listened to over the years? Can

we trust Him? Is the nourishment that we need to see us through this life, is that nourishment sufficient if we don't get our full portion? Jesus said to Martha: "There is only one thing needed. Mary has chosen it." What is it? Dare to believe I am with you. Listen for my voice in this moment.