

## COULD YOU NOT WATCH ONE HOUR WITH ME?

The story of Martha and Mary is so familiar to us. All those who identify with Martha think that she gets a raw deal from Jesus here. AND. Jesus is soon going to avail himself of the hospitality Martha is struggling with. My mother used to say to me that when she got to heaven she had a bone to pick with Jesus because he got this one WRONG!

Putting the demands of hospitality aside for a moment, just focus on what Jesus says to Martha. “There is only one thing necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It will not be taken from her.” When we hear the Lord speak like that we nod our heads in agreement. There is only one thing truly necessary. But if I were to ask you right here and now just what you think that one thing is—what would you say? Do you have such clarity about the answer that it would immediately enter into your mind? What is that one thing?

The answer comes when we look at what Jesus is doing. He draws Martha’s attention to what Mary is doing. And just what is Mary doing? Well, very little actually. She is just sitting at his feet. She is just there. Not questioning, not doing, not pressuring herself. Just being with. Just listening. Could that be the one thing? Just being with the Lord. Just listening to his voice? Listening for his voice? Just spending time with. Just being with.

Do you remember the scene from the night of the Last Supper where Jesus unfolds the Eucharist and shows us what to do and speaks those unforgettable words we hear at every Mass? “This is my body, for you. This is the cup of my blood given up for you.” Then after the meal is finished he leads the eleven out into the spring night, down the Kidron Valley and over to the Garden of Gethsemane where they typically camp out when in Jerusalem. Jesus takes Peter, James and John a bit farther on and tells them he wants them to pray with him because his soul is deeply troubled. They do but then they fall asleep. He comes back to them and rouses them and asks them to keep praying. They do but the fall asleep again. They are tired men. Exhausted and overwhelmed.

This time when Jesus goes to them he asks a simple question. “Still sleeping? Could you not watch one hour with me?” The Lord does not often ask a great deal of his apostles but whenever he does great things happen. Here they fail him. Back in 1971, I was in my Second Year of Theological Studies at Saint Charles Seminary. Each September the Seminary would have a five-day retreat for all the returning seminarians. That year we were blessed to have Bishop Fulton J. Sheen as our spiritual retreat Master. He gave three talks a day for five days.

I was blessed to be invited to join some other seminarians at the Rector’s table with Bishop Sheen one night for dinner. He seemed frail to me. He was about 75 years old at the time. But when he got into the pulpit some power just took hold. The thing I remember most from that dinner was his eyes. When he looked at me I felt like he could see into my soul. Never before or since have I ever encountered a person with such eyes as his. He was a holy man.

One of his talks to us as seminarians was about how he had heard about the devotion of making a holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament each day as an answer to Our Lord's question about spending an hour with him. Not an hour one night but an hour every day. He said that he had done that all his priestly life. I remember saying that I believed I could do that too. And from then on I made a daily holy hour. For thirty of those years it was a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament.

When I came to Saint Anthony's we had exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Mondays from after the 8:15 Mass until Mass at 7:30 in the evening. When the pandemic hit that all stopped. Slowly we restored just four hours of devotion on Monday mornings. That is what we have now. But about three months ago I had a dream in which the Lord said to me that before I left Saint Anthony's He wanted me to create a Chapel of Perpetual Adoration for our parishioners. It was to be open and available 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The purpose was to have a place where any and all could come to pray and especially for the return of our children to the practice of our Catholic faith. Trust me when I say: that was not something I had thought about or called to do. But I believe now that the Lord has placed this on my heart and it will happen before I leave.

The word adoration is interesting. It comes from the Latin: AD—toward; ORO—the mouth (the word, oral comes from this root). Towards the mouth. Adoration means that when you spend time with your beloved it is like a gentle kiss on the lips to your beloved, a sealing of the friendship with a loving kiss. Adoration is spending time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. That is what Mary was doing. Spending time with Jesus, her beloved. It is not easy to do this at first. There is an awkwardness. What do I do? What do I say? Is anything really happening? But slowly, slowly a level of comfort comes. And what used to be an awkward ten or fifteen minutes now becomes a half hour or more of quiet time and prayer time. I look at the Lord. The Lord, in the Blessed Sacrament looks out at me. I feel his gaze upon me. He looks at me with this love and it is unmistakable. I don't always feel it. But I believe it.

Why don't you try it? Recently retired? Come and pray on Mondays. Monday is your day off? Come and sit a spell. Jesus says: Come to me all you who labor and are weary and I will give you rest." Anyone here not need a little more rest? Anyone here not really want to experience Our Lord embracing you in your wounds? Do you know how much time an hour a week is? There are 168 hours of time in a week. One over one hundred sixty-eight is about one-half of one percent of your time. One-half of one percent of all the time God makes available to you. It is as if each week the Lord says: Here is a hundred-dollar bill. Now I ask you, as a return and in gratitude, to give back to me fifty cents. Could you not watch one hour with me?

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.