

Serving in the Name of God



I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Gen 18:1-10a)

God's appearance in the form of three men

¹The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak (*terebinth*) of Mamre (*center of Abraham's activities, north of Hebron*), as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. ²Looking up, he saw three men standing near him.

Abraham's invitation

When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, (*a sign of reverence*)^a ³he said: "Sir,* if it please you, **do not go on past your servant.** ⁴**Let some water be brought,** that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree (*oak*). ⁵Now that you have come to your servant, **let me bring you a little food,** that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward **you may go on your way.**" "Very well," they replied, "do as you have said."

Abraham's immediate actions

⁶**Abraham hurried** into the tent to Sarah and **said,** "Quick, three measures* (*unit of measurement, isang takal*) of bran flour! Knead it and make bread." ⁷**He ran** to the herd, **picked out** a tender, choice calf (*steer*), and *gave it* to a servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸Then **he got** some curds* and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and *set* these before them, **waiting on them** under the tree while they ate. (*Abraham was a terrific host! He managed well, personalized and complete service for travelers. What more can they ask?*)

God announces the birth of Abraham's son

⁹"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There in the tent," he replied. ¹⁰One of them* said, "I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son." (*Is this intention of*

the three men (God) in passing by or the reward of Abraham for his hospitality? For us who know the story, the message of the reading is that God is now fulfilling his promise he made to Abraham.)

THE FOCUS: The Hospitality of Abraham

REFLECTIONS

God appears to Abraham in a mysterious way. He appears and behaves like a human being.

Abraham recognizes God in them. He did them obeisance (bowing to the ground).

True enough, his visitors were God. At this point, before they go, God announces the birth of Isaac. Isaac is the son of promise. God will visit them again next year.

It pays to be hospitable to unknown passers by.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 5)

**HE WHO DOES JUSTICE WILL LIVE
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD.**

SECOND READING (Col 1:24-28)

Paul's participation in the sufferings of Christ

²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking* in the afflictions of **Christ** on behalf of his body, which is the church, ²⁵of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, ^{26m}the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past.

Christ manifested

But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, ²⁷ⁿto whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is **Christ** in you, the hope for glory. ^{28o}It is **he** whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and

teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in **Christ**.

THE FOCUS: Christ being Manifested to Us

COMMENTARY

- Majority of scholars say the author of Colossians is not Paul. The style, vocabulary and concerns of the letter to the Colossians are so different from Paul's authentic letters.
- V.24: The author (disciple of Paul) takes pride in his sufferings, because he participates or fills up what could have been lacking in the sufferings of Christ, for the sake of the Church, his body.
- In v.25, the author introduces himself as a minister who conforms to God's design. His ministry is stewardship. His ministry (stewardship) brings completion the word of God.
- In v. 26: Through his ministry, God's word is totally manifested. God's word was once hidden for ages; now it is completely revealed (through his ministry). V.26b specifies to whom God's word is revealed: to his holy ones.
- V.27 defines who are holy ones: chosen by God to know his riches / glory.
- V.27 specifies who is revealed: **Christ** in you.
- V.27b describes who Christ is: hope for glory.
- V.28 continues to describe Christ: whom we proclaim.
- Proclamation of Christ is coupled with admonition and teachings to become perfect (complete, lacking in nothing).
- In Christ, everyone finds perfection.

REFLECTIONS

The author is a missionary. He has captured the missionary spirit of Paul. He too rejoices in his sufferings for the sake of Christ and his Church.

Through his labors, the word of God / Christ himself (who was hidden before) is now fully manifested / revealed to us.

The reason of the full revelation is that we Christians may become perfect (complete) when we appear before Christ.

You become instrument of other people to bring them to perfection before Christ.

GOSPEL (Lk 10:38-42)

^{38*} As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. ^{39*} She had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. ^{40*} Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that **my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?** Tell her to help me." ^{41*} The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. ^{42*} There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

THE FOCUS: Hospitality

COMMENTARY

- This passage is part of the long travel narrative of Luke (Lk 9:51-19:27).
- Jesus has just finished his teaching on the Good Samaritan. Here in this passage, Jesus teaches to Martha what can be better done when he drops by.
- In v.38, the village is unnamed here. (In John, it is Bethany).
- Martha is a welcoming person. She welcomes Jesus. Only Jesus? No, he had companions... read "as they continued their journey...." (v.38).
- In v.39, Mary is introduced as her sister. She prefers to sit beside the Lord and listen.
- V.40 introduces the problem. Martha feels burdened by the many preparations. She complains she is left alone by her sister (Mary is lazy?).
- Vv.41-42 Jesus replies affirming the stance of Mary. She has chosen the better one (=she knows her priority).

REFLECTIONS

When we encounter Jesus, we prioritize listening to him over preparing elaborately for his / their merienda.

Next time Martha welcomes Jesus, she should not overdo her preparation so that she too may have time to listen to Jesus.

Luke is fond of presenting Jesus eat and drink; but he is also concerned on prioritizing in listening to his inputs and words of wisdom.

Some hosts prefer to distract their visitors with too much food, and are not interested in listening what could the visitor convey in his visit.

Let us exercise correct judgment.

One may wonder, is Martha not doing the right thing?

She is doing the right thing as a host just as Mary is doing the right thing. Hospitality consists both in preparing something to eat and in engaging in a nice conversation.

The question should be: how can we maximize the presence of the visitor to us / our presence to the visitor?

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading describes the hospitality of Abraham. The Second Reading talks about the fullness of the revelation of Christ. We cannot fully know Christ if we are not hospitable to him. The Gospel Reading teaches how to be hospitable.

How to develop your sharing / homily

How do you treat your visitors? Around the world, Filipinos are known to be hospitable people. Filipinos serve food (all kinds), turn on the videoke, vacate room to give way to the visitor, take photographs, borrow money to buy good food, etc.

The First Reading and the Gospel Reading talk about hospitality. *Maasikaso* (servicial) are Abraham and Martha.

Abraham shows hospitality to his visitors / strangers. He exerts efforts to make their stay comfortable (First Reading).

Martha welcomes Jesus when he passes by their place. She prepares food for him (Gospel). Mary too welcomes Jesus by entertaining him at the *sala*, listening to his words. Jesus teaches us how to be hospitable. He praises Mary for having made a better choice.

Some spiritual writers interpret this story as saying **contemplation** (Mary) is better or should take precedence to **action** (Martha). We need both in our lives.

As a teacher, Jesus prefers that we listen to him. This is consistent with his missionary work to spread the word of God. He does not want to be

distracted by too much food in the stomach. No exaggeration but moderation! We should not abandon him in favor of menial jobs.

When we are with Jesus, we listen attentively (contemplation), and we learn (action) more.

Today, many Christians are more concerned with **externals** (vestments, decorations, sitting arrangements, video presentation of outings and seminars, food during meetings, the menu, past accomplishments, thinking of good ol' days).

The Gospel teaches us to be more focused on the Word of the Lord. Receive His words.

Each disciple must be nourished by the Word of the Lord.

Involvement in the church has no meaning if everything is all externals, without learning anything from Jesus, without any input from the readings, if we are inhospitable to his words.

The goal of every Christian is to be with Jesus, to be totally present to him and to allow him to be totally present to us, without distractions. First class hospitality!

Are we hospitable to Jesus? St. Paul's disciple, the writer of the letter to the Colossians proves to be hospitable to Jesus by entertaining his revelation and full disclosure. This Christ is in us. And everyone of us must be perfected in him.

Jesus is our host in the mass. Let us allow him to give us light, love us and encourage us. Let us not distract him and ourselves by too much concern about externals.

As sacrament of hospitality, the eucharist should make us hospitable to one another.

Jesus promises us eternal life.

The Eucharist leads us to deeper spirituality. It bring us back to what is essential in our Christian faith and practice.

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III. OUR CONTEXT

1. What is the significance of breaking and sharing together God's Word?

2. What more strategies do we employ to help others read the Bible?

3. What could be other social activities that can go together with Bible study? (HM)