

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 20/21, 2019 – Reflection

"Martha, burdened with much serving, came to (Jesus) and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.'"

The Gospel of Luke, Chapter 10

Each week, as we gather around the table of the Lord to celebrate the Lord's Supper, the Holy Eucharist, we begin our worship and our meal by trying to make things right between ourselves and Our Lord; between ourselves and the community. The presider at Mass invites us to prepare ourselves by calling to mind our sins and begging God's mercy and pardon. After a moment of quiet thought and recollection, we pray as a family the "Confiteor", the prayer "I Confess". We humbly acknowledge that we have "greatly sinned" in the thoughts we think, in the words we speak, in action and inaction: "in what I have done and in what I have failed to do." What I have failed to do ...

Many years ago, I was the Associate Pastor at a parish in a beautiful town in northern Worcester County. The parish community was full of life and energy; so many good things were happening there to build the faith and serve the needs of those most in need. I remember one evening, we were having a celebration in the parish hall ... what the occasion was I don't recall, but I remember there were lots of stories swapped, lots of toasts raised, lots of laughter and great good cheer. It was a night when the faith family who genuinely liked one another

came together to let their hair down and just have a good time with one another. Well, the party couldn't last forever, and so, as the evening began to wind down, some of us had to clean up the hall and make it ready to use for Religious Education in the morning. Floors needed to be swept, trash needed to be bagged and taken out, chairs needed to be set, tables needed to be broken down and stored away. I was one of the worker bees that night and as I was breaking down tables and rolling them to the closet to put away, one of the leaders among the parishioners who was involved in many aspects of parish life stood by me and talked about all sorts of ideas he had for future parish activities and directions. As I worked, he talked. As I broke down table after table, he talked. As I rolled table after table to the closet, he talked. As I pushed a broom, he followed in my wake and talked. When all was done and the hall was ready for the kids to come in the morning, I turned out the lights. He stood right beside me as I flipped the switch ... and he talked. As we climbed the stairs and exited the center, he had me walk him to his car as he continued to talk. I finally said *Good Night* as he drove off ... no doubt, still talking.

As I walked back to the rectory, it dawned on me that that good man had *TALKED* plenty about what we should be doing, but he hadn't lifted a finger to *DO* anything!!

We can claim to others that we're "spiritual". We can say our prayers and visit our churches. We can stand with the community at Mass and profess our faith. We can respond to the prayers of the faithful with our "Lord, hear our prayers." We can receive our communions, sign ourselves with the cross, and call ourselves "Good Catholics." But, if we don't *DO* anything to back it up, what good is it? It's just a bunch of hot air.

The Church and Christianity shouldn't be just a lot of hot air ... that's what another place is all about! Faith isn't a feeling or a thought. Faith is rolling up your sleeves and getting to work: being the Good Samaritan when others would walk on by; putting your money where your mouth is; working to create the Kingdom of God right now on this earth; living Jesus' gospel not just for one hour once a week, but at home, at work, on vacation, in school, on the ballfield.

What we profess here, Who we follow here, the brothers and sisters we count as family here, the rituals we repeat here don't really mean all that much to us unless we profess it and follow Him and serve them and take them out there. Otherwise, all this is just a bunch of hot air, and, Lord knows, in the dog days of New England summer, we don't need any more of that!