

Mary of Bethany... (Luke 10:38-42)

We live stressed and pressed. Preoccupied.
Oh, to be a Mary!

Mary of Bethany took her place sitting down
as a foresister of all who listen, learn, reflect
on Jesus and his gospel.

She broke free - to waste time with God.

Mary was a quiet young woman
leading an orderly little life in the pattern of the
times.
An intense interior nature surfaced only in her
eyes;
and no one sought to find out
what her thoughts were about.
She was sensitive and sensible,
sifting and sweeping her hours away.
Her days were ordered by her take-charge
sister Martha,
and the house of the man, brother Lazarus.
Surrendered to solicitude,
she was Kept Busy.

Within narrow walls that enclosed her,
little sister saw a lopsided world
from a safe hiding place.
If she felt boxed in or bored,
she was too pious to show it.

But hospitality was a code the household
practiced
religiously, and the door was open.
One day Jesus walked in.

Mary's eyes never left him.
Her feet barely budged.
Her ears never heard her sister,
calling from the cupboard.
Hers was pure contemplation.

Mary broke rank
to sit at the feet of the Guest
and listen to him...
to learn from the Rabbi.
It was not the pattern for women.
Jesus not only encouraged her to stay,
but also told Martha, gently but firmly,
she worried too much.

Mary sat there, conversant with Truth,
taking in every word of the Word.

Whatever Jesus said
was written on her heart.

She knew her future would change
in the range of the Light that came in and led
out.
Indeed, Jesus came back to Mary
and she did to him.

When he said,
"Mary has chosen the better part,
and it will not be taken from her,"
Jesus underwrote a free decision.

It enabled Mary to come off the sidelines
and take a new place beside him.
Jesus never told her what she had to do.
He just broke a pattern.

And he who always graced the table,
shifted the base of hospitality
to one person's space for another
as he sat there with Mary...
at a Reception.

Contemplation is a hard choice
for the duty-bound, the discipline-free,
and for all of us who know
our time and space so well.

Contemplation dislodges.
It moves from heart to head to feet,
and loves reversing order.
Always expansive,
it learns to laugh and cry with a Friend
just in breaking up boxes.
Life can be spent in a lopsided carton
labelled "Mechanics of Living."
Contemplation relocates.
It even lets God come out of a box.

We face unmarked paths and heights and
crossroads,
and must contemplate unknowns.
We cling to the familiar
while it slips away underfoot.
Caught up in time, we worry much.

Mary chose... to listen to him.
It's still the first choice.

Centring on Jesus
gives and takes Artistic Liberty.

What better part will not be taken away?
The answer is discovered
between two persons –
one of them is Jesus.

(Referencing tba)

Matthew 26: 6-13 Anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany

(A Model for encouraging Journal-writing and Reflection)

- Read Scripture Passage (several times)
- Journal initial Personal Responses
- Discussion: participate in an intentional engagement in the story - a contemporary reading or a role play
- Digging Deeper: exploration in a chosen area by entering into more intimate discussions about an aspect of the text that provokes or inspires
- Journal secondary Personal and Corporate Responses
- Sharing - Looking at the Responses that Others choose to show
- Additional Input - looking at Commentaries and Interpretations
- Contextualising the Passage - examining historical and literary issues (also social, psychological issues, etc...)
- Journal tertiary Responses - moving towards discernment and application

A prophet-woman broke a jar (TiS 696)

1. A prophet-woman broke a jar,
By Love's divine appointing.
With rare perfume she filled the room,
Presiding and anointing.
A prophet-woman broke a jar,
The sneers of scorn defying.
With rare perfume she filled the room,
Preparing Christ for dying.

2. A faithful woman left a tomb
By Love's divine commission.
She saw, she heard, she preached the Word,
Arising from submission.
A faithful woman left a tomb
With resurrection gospel.
She saw, she heard, she preached the Word,
Apostle to apostles.

3. Though woman-wisdom, woman-truth,
For centuries were hidden,
Unsung, unwritten, and unheard,
Derided and forbidden,
The Spirit's breath, the Spirit's fire,
On free and slave descending,
Can tumble our dividing walls,
Our shame and sadness mending.

4. The Spirit knows, the Spirit calls,
By Love's divine ordaining,
The friends we need to serve and lead,
their powers and gifts unchaining.
The Spirit know, the Spirit calls,
From women, men and children,
The friends we need, to serve and lead.
Rejoice, and make them welcome!

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Challenges for Liturgists:

1. What sounds are associated with this scene?
2. What smells can you imagine?
3. What physical actions take place?
4. How could these be used in worship