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VATICAN - AVE MARIA - Rev. Luciano Alimandi - "Mary chooses the better part"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - I invite you to contemplate a while with me with the eyes of the heart the famous episode in Luke's Gospel, of Jesus in the house of his friend Lazarus, where he converses with the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary .

Martha, it is again Luke who speaks, busy with house work, reproves Mary, who, we can truly say, was all taken by Jesus. The Lord lovingly defends Mary and says: "Martha, Martha, you are concerned with many things but only one is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her" (Lk 10, 41-42). Although this Gospel passage is not usually associated with verses which refer to her, out thoughts turn naturally to the Mary the Mother of Jesus. Not only because Martha's sister bears the same name, but because of the disposition of her heart, entirely focussed on the Lord, absorbed in His Will, a typical Marian trait. Through the centuries rivers of ink have flowed with regard to this disposition of the soul which puts God's Will above everything else and is very clearly described in the episode faithfully, especially about the relation between the active and contemplative life, giving first place to the latter. In fact the Lord's remark about Mary "she has chosen the better part", could be understood as follows: putting Christ's Will at the centre of life is the best thing a Christian can do, it is the fundamental option to holiness.

In the light Gospel a person orients life towards a basic decision and in this experience is drawn by a fundamental option which, in fact, determines the very being and acting of the person. Every basic decision taken by the creature becomes determinant: career, human glory, money, survival, taking advantage of the weak, opportunism... all this rotates around the I with the consequence that what is chosen does not orient to Heaven but, sacrificing everything for earth, brutifies man who instead was created in the image and likeness of God.

In this passage it would appear that Martha has yet to understand the fundamental option of holiness which is precisely, "doing the will of Jesus". This is why the Master scolds her gently as if to help her see that her reproof of Mary was not only unjust but it should have been addressed to herself. Martha should become like Mary: all focussed on being in Christ, not vice versa: being busy around Christ.

Jesus, who loves Mary sincerely, as he does each of us, wishes for her and for everyone that the radical decision for holiness becomes the fundamental option, around which and from which all other reasons for living find a reason for being. (Agenzia Fides 8/11/2006 - righe 58; parole 824)

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