



Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson



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"...there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42).

Poor Martha. When the Master comes to visit her home, she is busy with the many preparations, while her sister Mary seems content to sit at the Lord's feet and listen to what he has to say. Martha needs some help, and she tells Jesus so in no uncertain terms.

Certainly, the mundane preparations for any worthy undertaking are important, and Martha is very much about all of that when Jesus visits her home. But her sister Mary has another idea. The typical reaction to this story is to make it a story of comparison, one which begs the question of which of the behaviors is better. The human mind does a lot of that, and even in places where there should be no comparison—like Masonic lodges—the tendency to choose one over the other is strong.

Let me suggest, however, that the Bible in general—and the Gospels in particular—advance a subversive message that *inclusion* trumps *exclusion* every time. The subtle message here is one about how *even women* can be disciples, a prominent theme in the Gospel of Luke.

The human propensity to exclude others, to make judgments about who is in and who is out, is a serious spiritual issue for all of our modern society, for church communities, and I daresay, for our beloved Craft. Our efforts toward intentional diversity ought to be encouraged and pursued, not merely for the sake of greater numbers in our fraternity, but because it's the right thing to do.

Jesus refuses to be taken in by Martha's complaining, and his answer to her seems to suggest that Mary's apparent abdication of her hospitality duties is not Martha's concern. There is a time and a place for both forms of devotion as shown by the sisters.

Professor Karoline Lewis says, "This is not a story about comparison but completion. Not about *who* is better, but *when* is better. Not about what is better, but why it is better. Perhaps if we allow for a more nimble and gracious view of the Kingdom of God, we might be able to imagine more of the world as part of it—even ourselves. And when we imagine ourselves as part of God's Kingdom, we are instantly called to bring about its presence here and now."

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat