



Homily by Father Valerio di Trapani, cm

Holy Mass 25th September 2021

The journey of your 21st General Chapter is now starting, and like Jesus and with Jesus it has found in Bethany a welcoming home, where people find listening, love and tenderness. According to John, the evangelist, after leaving Bethany Jesus went to Jerusalem, where He would be captured by the Jews, killed and would rise on the third day.

The Gospel, we have listened to, speaks about Jesus' visit to Martha and Mary. It is not by chance that this passage follows the parable of the Good Samaritan! In fact, to answer the question of the doctor of the law: "*what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*", besides the well-known commandment of Love, Luke adds first the beautiful parable and then Bethany's events. The two stories seem to be contradictory:

- the first story highlighted the model offered by the Samaritan, who stopped and cared for the wounded man, making gestures of service,
- the second one praised the welcoming attitude of Mary, who sat and listened attentively to Jesus instead of getting lost in many services.

The two texts reflect the two groups existing within Luke's community, to whom he was addressing his Gospel. In fact, with the increasing number of disciples, some complained that the poor were neglected, while others said that they were neglecting the "*Word of God*" in order to feed the needy (cf. Acts 6).

What is the connection we may see between the parable of the Good Samaritan and the events at Bethany?

Jesus seems to say that love should be put into practice with hospitality and service, and attentive listening of the Word, while being deeply in touch with the reality. Jesus tells us that Christian life is not a theory, but **service given out of love to history and humanity, in fidelity to our current time.**

The Samaritan, unlike the priest and the Levite, realized that the situation he came across was an invitation for him to stop, kneel down and care for the wounded man. His heart got totally involved in the man's misadventures, and it urged him to make gestures of love and care.

In the same way, Mary understood perfectly what was happening within her home and chose to sit at the feet of Jesus in order to listen carefully to the Master.

Martha, like the priest and the Levite, privileged the empty tradition, repeating the usual gestures, though disconnected from what was happening, thus they were unable to show love for humanity. Jesus, in fact, did not reproach Mary for her gestures, but for her concern about getting done so many things that took her away from the only one essential at that time: listening to Jesus.

Dear Sisters, the Lord asks you to be in touch with the reality, and faithful to God and humanity. Gaudium et Spes, N.1, reminds us that nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in the hearts of Christ's disciples, and that they are truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds. (cf. GS 1)

It is interesting that both the Samaritan and Mary **chose to lower themselves ... What a good choice! The feet of the poor and the feet of Christ, are the best spot to look out at the reality.**

- On Jesus' feet Mary poured precious and abundant perfume, expressing the gratuity and generosity of a passionate love;
- Jesus' feet were washed by tears, wiped with hair and anointed with oil, expressing tenderly the gratitude of one who has met God's mercy;
- at the feet of the tree, Jesus called Zacchaeus to be part of His life and receive His abundant Love;
- the disciples' feet were washed by Jesus to remind them that they should always choose to love the poor;
- at the feet of Jesus on the cross, Mary and John were addressed His last words.

From this humble position at the feet of God and of the poor the Sisters of Charity are called to "see God" and to receive His will. Without getting on our knees to serve the poor, to listen to the Word and to contemplate God's mystery, the discernment of the signs of the time would be impossible.

Dear Sisters, may this General Chapter help you to look lovingly at the world in which you live.

May the example of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret and Saint Vincent de' Paul enlighten your important work. Amen