

**After the Heart of Jesus ...**

*The Lord said to her in reply,  
"Martha, Martha, you are anxious  
and worried about many things.  
There is need of only one thing.  
Mary has chosen the better part  
and it will not be taken from her."*



In Martha's eyes, she sees her lazy sister sitting with Jesus and complains, "Lord, are you not concerned that my sister has left me all alone to do the household tasks? Tell her to help me."

Jesus' surprising response is, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things; one thing only is required. Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it."

But Jesus didn't say what the better portion was. What is this better portion? If we know what the better portion is, then we would choose it for ourselves. Wouldn't we?

One summer when I was a seminarian I went with the parish's youth group to work in Appalachia for a week at Nazareth Farm. There we helped the poor living in the hill country build homes, we helped with child care, and visited people. The week we were there, there were also groups from Kansas City and from Terre Haute, Indiana. It was also an experience of living in community for the teens -- forty of us lived in this small farmhouse. We lived the lifestyle of the people we served -- simple meals, outhouses, and we washed up in the creek. From the moment we got there and I saw the teens interacting I knew something very special was happening. We really formed a community -- we ate a common meal at dinner time, and we prayed morning prayer and evening prayer together.

On Wednesday, community night was held. We invited people from the surrounding hill communities to gather at the farm for refreshments, activities, and prayer. Every night, we gathered for prayer at 8:30 p.m. And Wednesday was to be no exception. But on Wednesday evening at 8:30 p.m. we were in the midst of a close volleyball game. The score was 11 to 9, and the bell to announce prayer was rung. Just as I was about to say, "We'll be right there, we're almost finished -- the game's 11 to 9," everyone went off to pray. They immediately dropped the ball and gathered around the camp fire for prayer. Prayer was more important than the game! I learned a valuable lesson of the importance of prayer.

To recognize the presence of the Lord in our midst, and to listen and pay attention to it -- that is the better portion that Jesus spoke of.

There is no one way to the Lord. Some of us will find the way primarily through action and others primarily through prayer. Yet we can't be so anxious about how much work we're doing or how much prayer we're praying that we fail to recognize the presence of the Lord and listen to him. The Lord will truly be in our midst this coming week -- in our work, in our families, and in our relationship with friends -- in our prayers, in our quiet reflection, in our thoughts, and in our hearts. May we choose the better portion -- to recognize the presence of God already in our midst, and to listen and pay attention to the voice of God.

This weekend many teens from our youth group are at the diocesan Youth Leadership Convention. St. Walters has one of the largest groups at the Convention. The theme of the convention is to "See the Lord." Please pray for our young people at YLC as they continue to grow as leaders in their faith and share the Good News not only with their peers but with all of us.

With some of the news stories about the Catholic Church the past few weeks, I have been reflecting on our life as Catholics. It is an interesting time to be a Catholic. I started writing some thoughts about this topic for this column, and it ended up a two page article! If you care to read a perspective piece about the news we've heard about the Church, please see the article later in this bulletin.

Congratulations to our new Parish Pastoral Council Officers selected at the July 11 meeting. They are Chairperson **Jerry Smiley**, Vice-Chairperson **Catie VanValkenberg**, and Recorder **Judy McGuire**. Continued thanks to all those on the various Core Teams and Task Forces who continue to meet throughout the summer!

In this summertime of vacationing, please remember that God never takes a vacation from loving us, and we should never take a vacation from worship our loving God. Make sure Mass is a planned part of every weekend wherever you spend it. Also, please remember your support of St. Walter throughout the summer. We count on the consistent support of parishioners throughout the year. If you will be away, please send in your offerings or bring them to the next Mass you come to. The summer might be a great time to sign up for e-contributions and not worry about weekly or monthly contribution envelopes.

After the Heart of Jesus!

*Father John*