

## PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 11)**

**July 22, 2007**

**Genesis 18:1-10a**

**Psalm 15**

**Colossians 1:15-28**

**Luke 10:38-42**

### **First Things First**

It is amazing how many of us are incapable of prioritizing the important things in our lives. Amid the hustle and bustle of the daily trolley we call life, we run frantically helter-skelter trying to accomplish this task and that. Invariably, very few of our tasks get done to the best of our ability and we resolve, breathless and worn out, to do better the next time.

Jesus taught several lessons on setting the right priorities. He wanted us to give place to what really matters. In the Luke pericope, Martha, the consummate hostess, fusses about preparing for Jesus' visit to her home. Even *after* Jesus and his disciples have arrived, we get a glimpse of Martha worrying about the myriad things that still needed to be done. Perhaps the vases needed fresh flowers, the clay pots needed cool water, the meat was not yet as tender as she had wanted it, her special floor mats for guests were still drying, and Mary, her sister, was giving no thought at all to gracious entertaining. In fact, Mary was sitting down. Sitting down listening to Jesus while she, Martha, was sweating and fretting over entertaining their guests!

It seems that her sister's behavior put poor Martha in such a tizzy that she did not even confront Mary herself, but rather asked Jesus to scold her. How Jesus' response must have startled Martha. "Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41,42, *CEV*).

Was it that Jesus did not appreciate the comforts that Martha was trying to provide him? Was he averse to industriousness? Of course not. However, Jesus was making the point that Martha's priorities were mixed up. The provision Martha was making was acceptable, but it wasn't the most important or "necessary" thing for that moment. Mary, on the other hand, realized that Jesus was the Bread of Life. No earthly feast she fixed could compare to what he offered. Sitting at Jesus' feet she had the opportunity to commune with him, to listen, to learn, and be fed with words of life.

How often do we miss the opportunity to fellowship with our Lord? How often do we sidestep the call of discipleship while we pay attention to issues on the periphery? How often do we neglect to put first things first?

We are not alone in this. As Jesus pointed out, the people in his day also missed the mark. Some who publicly admitted that they wanted to follow Jesus, quickly found other priorities when Jesus extended an invitation to them. “Lord, let me wait until I bury my father” or “I want to go with you, Lord, but first let me go back and take care of things at home” (Luke 9:59b, 61b, *CEV*).

Jesus makes it clear that service to God involves establishing right priorities while avoiding a worrisome spirit. “Don’t keep worrying about having something to eat or drink ... But put God’s work first, and these things will be yours as well” (Luke 12:29,31, *CEV*).

As we seek to order our priorities, may we joyfully choose that which is necessary, and that which brings us into a closer relationship with God so that we can stand in God’s presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent (Colossians 1:22b).

This week’s Reflection was prepared by Dorette Saunders who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Senior Editor in the Education Unit of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Albania** – With thanks to God for the completion of the translation of the interconfessional New Testament in Albanian and with prayers for its launch, and with prayers for peace and for the fragile political situation in the country; **Macedonia** – With thanks to God for the revised Bible which will be published this year, and with prayers for God’s guidance for all projects and for Scripture distribution; **Greece** – With thanks to God for the successful distribution of the Children’s Bible, and with prayers for the completion of the translation of the Septuagint into modern Greek.

**Activity Corner:** “First Things First” Activity  
Supplies needed: Bible; paper, red and blue pens.

With a blue pen, number your paper from one to ten vertically. As they come to mind, list ten activities you consider important to your life. Now read the story about being a disciple in Luke 9:57-62 and Luke 12:22-34. Review your list, using a red pen to rank your activities now according to the value you think they really deserve. Rank them with #1 being the most important and #10 being the least important. Did your rankings change? Were you surprised by your new rankings? What did you learn? Pray and ask God to help you set wise priorities.