

MARTHA AND MARY (Lk 10:38-42)
Being attuned to others' needs

Intent of this Exercise:

- ✓ *To become sensitive to the needs of others.*
- ✓ *Why occasionally, we feel resentful of those we love and also of those who love us.*

Uses of this Exercise:

- ✓ *For Bible study*
- ✓ *For a pep-talk or homily*
- ✓ *For a prayer session*
- ✓ *To improve our relationships.*

Target Audience:

- ✓ *All audiences, especially useful for parents, husbands, wives and those in the helping professions: priests, sisters, teachers, nurses, social workers, etc.*

Introductory Session.

Singing hymns.
 Opening prayer

Gospel Narrative; Lk 10:38-42

If possible re-write the Gospel narrative. Make it a longer and more dramatic fashion. You may prepare a short play -write based on that story, for instance, a Drama or a Radio-play and have some participants to present it to the group

Personal Word:' (writing work)

After the presentation of the Gospel story ask the participants to reply to the following questions.

1. Did Martha and Mary love Jesus? How did they show it?
2. With which of the two sisters was Jesus more pleased? Why? How did He show it?
3. About what and against whom did Martha complain? Why?
4. Reflecting on the words of Martha, actually speaking, with whom was she more annoyed? Why?
5. Have you ever felt resentful of people who truly love you? For instance, your Parents, Marriage partners, teachers and best friends? Why?
6. Have you ever felt angry and resentful of people whom you love and whom you tried to help; for instance, the needy, a friend, your students, etc. Why? Explain
7. Have you ever blamed them of being ungrateful after all you did for them? What did you tell them? Or what did you think of them?
8. Can love and resentments go together? Why? How?
9. Is it possible to love and serve people without resentments and anger? How?
10. What's the best way to help others?

Small Groups Sharing and Discussion

- ✓ Divide the larger group into smaller groups of about 6 to 10 each.
- ✓ Each group will choose its own secretary and chairperson.
- ✓ By turns, the group members will share their replies to questionnaire above.
- ✓ Clarifications and discussion will follow.
- ✓ The secretaries will prepare a consolidated report on the sharing and discussions of their groups.

General Session Reports and General discussion

Reports and discussion:

- ✓ The moderator will chair the general session..
- ✓ The secretaries will read the reports of their groups.
- ✓ The leading ideas of the reports may be written on the board.
- ✓ After the reports are read, and the leading ideas are recorded on the board, a general discussion will follow.

Input by the moderator:

- ✓ The moderator will round up the general session by giving an input. His input may comprise
- ✓ The leading ideas brought by the groups and recorded on the board.
- ✓ Questions brought for discussion at the general session.
- ✓ The moderator's thoughts and observations.

Ideas Suitable for an Input.

- Both sisters, Martha and Mary loved Jesus dearly.
- Both were equally affectionate and kind.
- Both wanted to please Jesus.
- However, while Mary received Jesus' approval. Martha did not.
- Mary pleased Jesus, Martha did not.
- Why? What made the difference?
- Mary was sensitive to the needs of Jesus. Martha wasn't.
- Mary offered Jesus what he needed and wanted. Martha offered Jesus what she wanted.
- To make people happy we have to give them what they need and want, not what we feel they want or what we like to give. . .
- The best gift a child can give to her mother on her birthday is not his favorite brand of candy or his best toys, but a kiss, a word of encouragement, a sign of appreciation for what she is and does for him. This is what she needs and wants, not his candy
- In our personal relationships we have to be attuned to the needs and wants of others and offer them the things that will satisfy them, not would satisfy us!
- We should not project our needs, wants and likes on others and then force them into accepting what we would like to be offered.
- When we serve others, say the needy, the sick, the suffering, etc. we should first, ascertain what they want and need, only then, offer it to them.

- If we decide for others what they need, or what they should like, they will feel left out of account, lorded over. Finally, they will harbor resentments against us.
 - In the process, we will feel rejected and resentful against the very people we set out to help. We may end by playing the game: "See what you have done to me; I was just trying to help you".
 - In her hustling and bustling to serve Jesus, Martha felt resentful of Mary and even more of Jesus, her beloved Lord and Master.
 - Listen carefully to her complain: "***Lord, do you not care that my sister left me alone to do all the serving?***"
 - Actually, Martha was angry not so much with her sister but with Jesus. To put her complaint in a simple form she meant: "***Jesus, you do not care for me***".
 - Jesus could have very well retorted: It's you who don't care for me!
 - Did I ask you to prepare a big meal for me? In the way you want to serve me, actually who do you try to please, yourself or me?
 - Mary, on the other hand, was sensitive to the needs of Jesus. What Jesus wanted at that very moment of his life – *He was going to Jerusalem to be condemned and crucified* - was not just a big meal, but sympathy, company, friendship and intimacy. That is what Mary gave him!
 - The best gift we can give to others is to be sensitive to their needs, and an acceptance of their feelings.
 - Jesus' way of helping others was unobtrusive, respectful, unassuming. He did not even cure anyone without their asking or expressing their wish to be cured.
 - He was always attuned to the needs and feelings and desires of others.
- You may comment on some passages from the Gospels to exemplify this point: for instance...
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| Mt 14:13-21; | Jesus makes a leper clean. |
| Mt 15: 21-28 | A woman's' faith. |
| Mk 10:46-52; | Blind Bartimaeus' cure. |
| Mk 5:25-34; | Jairus' daughter and the woman with the flow of blood. |
| Lk 19:1-10; | Jesus and Zachaeus |
| Jn 5:1-9; | The paralytic at the pool. |
| Jn 11:1-44. | The resuscitation of Lazarus |

Reflection –cum- Prayer.

Reflection: Help the participants to reflect on the following points:

1. Do you love people? Whom do you love most?
2. How do you express your love to him/her/them?
3. What do you do for them? How do you do it?
4. Are you attuned to their needs, wants and feelings?
5. Do you force your love, your help, your services and your gifts on others?
6. How should you do it?
7. Did you ever feel resentful towards those you love, those you serve, those you sacrifice yourself for? Why? How to avoid this?
8. Do you feel angry and resentful towards those who love you? Why? What can you do to solve this problem?

Personal prayer. Spend some time in personal prayer asking the Lord:

- To teach you not only to love others, but also, how to express your love to them in an acceptable way to them
- To help you to be attuned and respectful to the needs and feelings of others.
- To be accommodative, unobtrusive and empathic in your attitudes towards others.
- To cleanse you from all feelings of anger and resentment

Close the session with a shared group prayer in which all are enjoined to pray for one another.

APPENDIX **Activities**

Time available, do not easily skip the activities. They are very effective in driving home the leading ideas of the exercise.

The best time for the activities are the afternoon hours.

Preparation of the activities: .

- Each group may prepare an activity based on any of the leading ideas that surfaced during the exercise.
- The method or means used for the activity is left to the choice of the Participants, for instance: Role-play, Radio-play, Mime, Film shooting, Etc.
- Some instances of possible activities could be:
 - An over concerned teacher trying to help her students.
 - An over- protective parent looking after his/her children.
 - An over zealous parish ministering to his parishioners.
 - A boy/girl-friend trying to please his/her partner.
 - A host entertaining a guest in the family.

Presentation of the activities:

When the Participants are ready they will present their “creations” to the house.

After each presentation, a short analysis, evaluation and discussion will follow.

Note that the point to evaluate is not the artistic or dramatic value of the presentations, but their expressive or message value.