



SIEBENQUELL

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# There are no Godless spaces in the House

## Martha's Kitchen II

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*Only after we have seen and appreciated the great importance of hospitality can we move on in this story. Marta now stands up and goes before the Lord. This is not a matter of course. With the freedom that is born of friendship, she stands between Jesus and her sister and says to him: »Tell her to help me!« This is the kind of speech she dares to make because she is not afraid to talk to Jesus in this way. She is also not afraid to tell him her concerns clearly, plainly and bluntly.*

*Jesus' answer is well known, but it is usually underestimated. »Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things« Instead of hearing a groaning, slightly veiled accusation from Jesus, we should rather ask the question: How does Jesus even know this? Martha doesn't tell him. She only says that she has to do the work alone, but doesn't say a word about how much, complex, difficult or exhausting her work is. If we look closely at Jesus' answer, we realise that Jesus has obviously observed Martha at work for a long time and very closely. While he is talking to the others, he has obviously also been keeping an eye on Martha. Because in his answer he clearly confesses that he knows what she has been doing, how busy she has been, what she has been dealing with. Even though Mary is sitting at his feet, he is not indifferent to what is happening to Martha. The Lord also has his eye upon her.*

*The house is the symbol for the centre of life. Everything that happens in the house, in the centre of life, is of interest to Jesus. Even the kitchen, the service, the excessive demands and the stress. Theology, spirituality, learning and dialogue have a place in the large room where Mary sits. In the kitchen there is a place for work, worry, helpfulness and hectic. This is not the story of two houses, but of two experiential spaces within the same house.*

*The large room of encounter and conversation is a place of conviviality, togetherness and friendship. We usually see such places as classier and cleaner, tidier, and sometimes even like a stage. The kitchen, on the other hand, is usually a place of clutter, with stains, spillages, lots of things standing around and where work has to be done, even if it's not particularly pleasant or clean. The room where we eat is the place of shared joy. The kitchen is the place of work and effort, which often goes unrecognised.*

*We are accustomed to thinking that our spiritual life is something that should happen and take place in a clean and tidy space. We often experience this when we go to church, neatly attired and dressed to the nines, where everything is organised according to very clear and clean liturgical rules. This is how we often appear before God. At the same time, we are tempted to believe that the harsh realities of life, the experiences of the kitchen, of everyday life, are too normal and banal for the spiritual life. In some cases, it has even led us to see everyday life as unsuitable for life with God. Every time this happens, we are wrong. God is in love with the normality of life. Otherwise, he would not want to share the centre of life with us. We find this centre of life in the house, in all the rooms that make up a house.*

*We should not misuse this story. Unfortunately, this happens very often when we minimise Martha and her concerns. Jesus' words here are: »But only one thing is necessary.« But we hear something that Jesus does not say at all, namely: »Only one thing is necessary, and you have not chosen it!«*

*Jesus makes it perfectly clear that only one thing is necessary, but he does not directly define what that one thing is. He does not say that contemplation is the one thing. Jesus' question is not whether the kitchen is worth less than the large meeting room. His question is: What is fitting right now? Which room should I be in at this given moment? The one thing that is necessary is to do what is fitting. Mary should do what is fitting for her, and Martha should do what is fitting for her.*

*More on this in the next reflection.*

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