

Bishop's March 2010 Message

I find much wisdom (as well as a little humor) in the story of Jesus' visit with Mary and Martha in Bethany (see Luke 10). You know the story: Mary and Martha are preparing for their friend Jesus to be a guest in their home. All is fine until Jesus actually arrives. Then Mary sits at Jesus' feet, content in his presence, while Martha runs around the house making her last minute preparations, and getting upset with Mary in the process. Martha is so upset that she takes it to Jesus – "Lord, don't you care that my sister has abandoned me with the work?" To which Jesus replies: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things... one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the better part." Anxious, troubled, worried and distracted by many things. More often than not, those words are descriptive of our life together as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada: anxious about declining membership, troubled about dwindling budgets, worried about how much diversity our unity can endure, distracted by the latest social issues. As we scurry around to tend to these things, a pessimist would say that we are following the old dictum: when you don't know what to do, just keep busy. It's akin to re-arranging the deck furniture on the Titanic. As a Church we are too easily bumped off course, tilting at windmills, heading off on tangents. Jesus would say to us (as he said to Martha): "You are worried and distracted by many things... one thing is needful". What is that one needful thing?... the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and our proclaiming of it. In the seasons of Lent and Easter we are driven back to the Main Thing – the core and centre of what we believe. My friends, that's *Jesus*: born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. On the third day he rose again. Over these weeks, as we hear the heart of the Gospel proclaimed to us once more, let us not be tempted to veer off course. Rather may we each and all keep the Main Thing the main thing. In Jesus' presence may we meet and rest.

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
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