

Blogging toward Sunday

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The gospel gets domestic as Jesus—who is homeless, without a job, traveling from place to place, and looking for a free meal—intrudes into the home of two unmarried women.

Wonder of wonders, they welcome this itinerant rabbi into the inner sanctum of their home. Once again Jesus is breaking the boundaries, pushing at the limits; once again there are a few who are willing to risk welcoming and hosting this Jesus. After all, it's invariably a discomfiting experience when he pushes his way into your living room or your kitchen. When one dares to welcome Jesus as a guest, things get surprising.

As soon as he has settled in on the sofa he assumes his usual confrontational style. He has the nerve to criticize Martha for her work in the kitchen even as she is trying to fix him a meal. Then he praises Mary for choosing the "better part," namely taking the role of student—not a traditional role for women. He is turning everything upside down.

On his way to his costly work in Jerusalem, Jesus has paused for an evening with these two women. Whatever work he is doing, he has decided to do that work with the two of them. He disrupts the home—a place of refuge, retreat and renewal. Then he claims the home—where two women work and care for the needs of each other—as space where he cares for them. He seeks out, speaks to and instructs women, who are often relegated to the private space of the home, confined within the boundaries of domesticity. He treats them as full-fledged disciples, giving them himself and his teaching without reserve.

I'm confident that Luke means this to be a story that reveals much about Jesus' nature and his mission. Still, the story also has implications for us. To be a disciple of Jesus, one must not only leave the dead to bury the dead and move out without regard to the folks back home (last Sunday's gospel) but also be willing to risk, to

open one's door, sometimes in the middle of the night, and let Jesus into the living room.

For this Sunday then, here's a definition of a Christian disciple: A Christian is anyone with the guts to open his door and let Jesus in, to listen to Jesus even when he criticizes the way the Christian spends his time. A Christian is anyone willing to be mystified by Jesus, to stay with Jesus, and to let Jesus work within him.