

'I have discovered,' said Blaise Pascal, that all human evil comes from this, (our) being unable to sit still in a room.' (Pensées no.139)

Rather than see Martha and Mary as two orders of being in rivalry, the contemplative and the active, it is perhaps truer to understand this story as a lesson in how to overcome the war in ourselves between the need to sit still and the need to act, with the former *fuelling* the other rather than closing it down. Indeed, the greatest service we can offer is, at times, simply sitting still. For what Mary is offering in this story is the chance for Martha to question her own busyness. Why am I getting so worked up over this? What is really going on? So there's a 'sitting still' in our hearts that has to go on all the time so that we, in our turn, can offer that question to another, whether we are physically still or not. This being still in ourselves, whatever else is going on, including our own busyness, is the question St. Scholastica presents to her brother Benedict. So what's so important about getting back to your monastery tonight? Let's be still together. Let's enjoy each other's company while we can, for who knows what the Lord has ready for us next? Her strength is derived from her living out of the still centre of Christ. There's an immediacy here we otherwise call love – and no one should feel guilty if they love.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour