

Scholastica knows where the source of her love lies. She prays and her prayer is answered. A great storm comes and Benedict is rescued by intimacy. Forced to spend the night in conversation with his sister, three days before her death, though of course he does not know this and, like Martha, does not yet fully understand. There's a whole world here, explaining Jesus's plea to his disciples to enjoy his company while he is with them and to stay awake in prayer, shortly before his own death. Intimacy in prayer: intimacy in life. They are not opposed. We heard something of this wisdom in last night's First Reading.

*"Whence did the prudence spring that endowed me?"*

*Prayer brought it, to God I prayed, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me .*

*Who else can shew wise men the true path, check them when they stray? We are in his hands, we and every word of ours; our prudence is act, our skill is craftsmanship."*

Again there is no opposition there between contemplation and action it's the spirit in which they are done which is at issue- the better part which Mary has chosen and Martha has not is an uncomplaining spirit. This comes when someone knows they are loved as we heard with regard to St Therese of Lisieux on Sunday – like St Scholastica she is wise to helplessness, she knows that she has nothing to offer Jesus except her trust in his love. This is intimacy in prayer fuelling intimacy in life – teaching us how to love.

In a recent article in The Plough Zena Hitz explores the meaning of leisure and concludes that Augustine was rather afraid of it, just like so many of us, because it demands and perhaps reveals our own emptiness, an emptiness which can only be filled by God. The terror for us *"is our need to wait for God to act."* She cites several examples of people who have discovered the secret of this even in the midst of very busy lives – St Ambrose snatching every spare moment, even as bishop in Milan, to read; Einstein having some of his best ideas in the humdrum work of a clerk in a patent office; Archimedes so intent on his theorems that he ignores the summons to meet with a Roman official and loses his life instead. Again it's not the usefulness of an action that is necessarily its best justification but the spirit in which it is done.

*"Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb"*

Br John Mayhead

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