

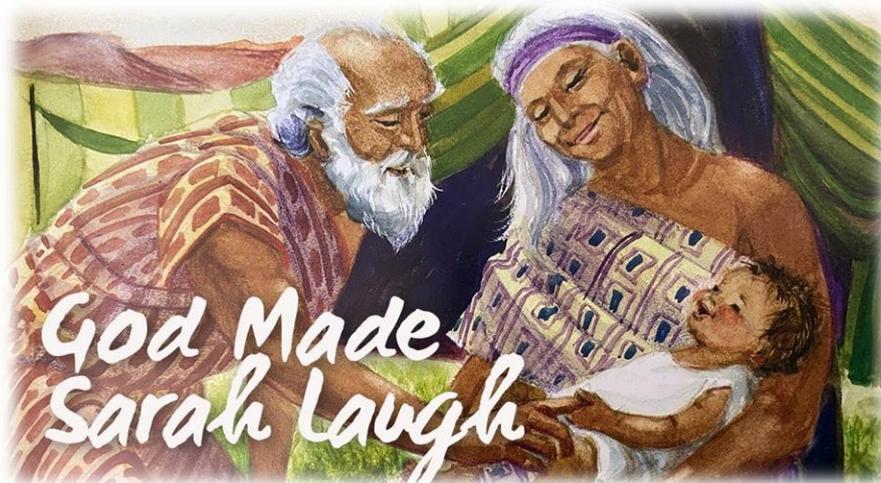
Today's first reading and Gospel speak to us of both listening to God and sharing a meal. We hear about the hospitality of Abraham and the welcome of Martha and Mary.



Having been called by God, Abraham set up camp near Jerusalem at a place close to the desert called Mamre. He set up his tent near a huge oak tree to give shade from the sun. One day, sitting outside under the oak tree, he sees three strangers. Showing hospitality to strangers was the custom.

Falling to his knees, as a sign of reverence, he invites them to stay, offers water to wash their feet, lets them rest under the tree and provides a little bread to eat. This light refreshment grows into a banquet as he gets Sarah, his wife, to prepare food.

After they had eaten and were about to leave, one of the travellers asked Abraham where his wife was. At that time, men and women did not eat together, so she was in the tent. The traveller says that he will visit next year by which time Sarah would have a son. When Sarah heard him say this, she laughed as she was beyond child-bearing age. However, when the child was born they called him Isaac, which means laughter.



The Gospel follows on from last week's story of the Good Samaritan. Martha is busy preparing a meal for Jesus and is put out that her sister, Mary, is sitting at Jesus' feet listening to him. Jesus is once more breaking with tradition in allowing Mary to sit and be taught by him. This was not acceptable for a woman in Judaism. Yet, despite Martha's annoyance, Jesus does not tell Mary to go and help Martha. He values what Martha offers and what Mary offers. He does not suggest that it has to be one or the other. Mary shows her contemplative side, whilst Martha shows her active side. The truth is that in order to be true disciples of Jesus, we need to be contemplatives in action.



True hospitality has aspects: first the welcome, encouraging the visitor to enter the house and be at home there: secondly, the gift – not just of food and drink – but also of time, listening to the visitor and giving of ourselves to them. Hospitality is much more than a simple welcome or an offer of food or drink. Hospitality is an attitude of heart that opens us to others and receives them on their own terms.

In the letter to the Hebrews we read,

*“Keep on loving one another. Remember to show hospitality to strangers, for some who did that entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:1-2)*



May we, as the community of The Most Holy Trinity, have the attitude of heart that enables us to show hospitality to others.

May we learn to be contemplatives in action, combining prayer and service in our daily lives.