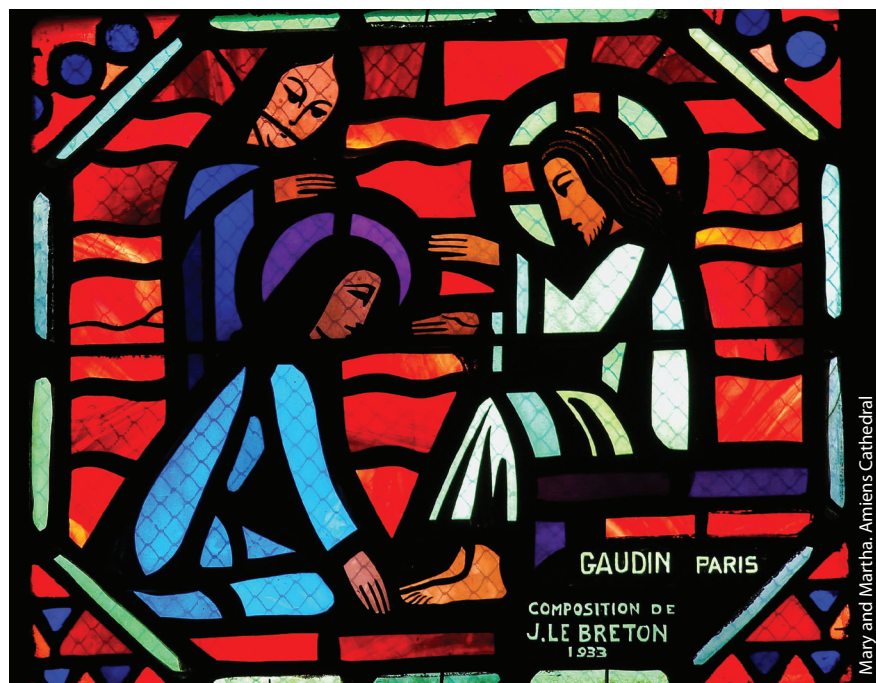


Mary and Martha



Janice Scott *reflects on* Luke 10:38-end

Luke the Gentile was always on the side of those on the margins of society – those who were poor or outcast as well as women – so he emphasised that Jesus came for all. Jesus sent the seventy to proclaim the good news to all sectors of society, and he told the lawyer that God's love is for everyone, even the despised Samaritans. Now he crosses Jewish cultural boundaries. It is tempting to sympathise with Martha, rushed off her feet trying to offer the required hospitality to the gathered group. Why should Mary be allowed to do nothing but sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to him? You can almost hear the sibling rivalry and resentment in Martha's words. She expected Jesus to remonstrate with Mary, but Jesus responded unexpectedly. In commending Mary, Jesus flouted normal convention. He was alone with a woman who was not his relative; he allowed a woman to sit as one of his disciples and he taught her in her own home. It is difficult today to imagine how shocking such behaviour was in first-century Judaea. It seems as though Jesus was rejecting Martha in favour of her sister, but he did not reject Martha's ministry, only her busyness. Martha was unable to relax and merely accept Jesus, while courageous Mary sat loosely to social rules, determined to learn all she could while Jesus was with still them. 🍷

Understanding God, remind us that taking time out to sit in silence with you is more beneficial for us than constant work. Give us the patience to take Mary's role, rather than always busying ourselves with doing more and more. Amen.

Shared prayer Part II – prayer days

by Caroline Fletcher

Prayer days may be organised when there's something specific to pray about, although the idea of a whole day of prayer can be daunting. So how to encourage everyone to become involved?

- Communicate. Explain clearly in advance what is involved.
- Enable people to drop in. Most people can find at least some part of the day to get involved.

- Set up prayer stations. Areas designed to encourage and inspire prayer might include a giant sheet of paper for writing prayers down, or spaces displaying pictures and playing music.
- Provide prayer ideas. Pointers are helpful, and might take the form of a short talk, video clip or PowerPoint.
- Vary prayers. Different types of prayer include thanksgiving, praise, confession and intercession.
- Pray in different ways throughout the day – for example in small groups, out loud, silently meditating on scripture, kneeling, standing, or walking outside. 🍷

Characters from the lectionary

Elizabeth Ferard (1825-1883) is commemorated tomorrow. Caroline Hodgson looks at her life and legacy.

Elizabeth Ferard was born into a prominent Huguenot family and it was a family friend, Archibald Tait, then Bishop of London, who encouraged her to visit deaconess communities in Germany. In 1856 she went to Kaiserswerth on the River Rhine, where she witnessed deaconesses teaching girls and ministering to the sick – a practical and religious lifestyle for women who didn't want to become religious sisters.

Back in England in 1861, the help of a wealthy relative, Ferard founded the North London Deaconess Institution near King's Cross. The women dedicated themselves to teaching and caring for those who were sick, without taking formal vows. Ferard was ordained a deaconess in 1862. She later ran a convalescent home for children in Redhill.

The community she founded still exists as the Community of St Andrew in Westbourne Park. The focus of ministry for community members includes prayer, evangelism, pastoral work and hospitality. 🍷

“Grace, like water, flows to the lowest part.”

Philip Yancey (born 1949), author