

3rd Saturday of Lent “Worshiping from the Heart”  
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My friends, in our first reading, the prophet Hosea is continuing his admonition of his countrymen as the northern kingdom is collapsing. Recall this is all happening a little over 2700 years ago. And, the insight he is hammering into his countrymen’s heads is that God does not care about the things they “do” as much as he is interested in what is really going on inside their hearts. Hosea writes, “For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” We seem to have the same theme playing out in our Gospel reading. Here we have a self-righteous fellow listing off all of his accomplishments as he prays to God on the one hand. On the other, we have this lowly man who is humble and contrite in his prayers before the Lord. Maybe, this lowly fellow hadn’t done as much as the other guy listing off his accomplishments, but God prefers the lowly fellow because of what is going on in his heart. I find it really fascinating because there is a clear tension in the bible regarding faith and works. If you ask St. James, faith without works is dead. And, in many other places, Jesus demands that his disciples’ actions reflect who they are...like picking up our cross and following him, clearly something we are called to do. From my perspective, God clearly wants both from us right? God wants us to be humble, contrite and loving. God wants us to demonstrate that love through our actions as well. I got thinking to myself that perhaps the story of Mary and Martha is a helpful hermeneutical lens here. Martha, busy in everything that she is doing but a wonderful person. And Mary, sitting at the feet of the Lord simply listening to him. Clearly, Mary chooses the better part.

And so, maybe we can take some time today and reflect what is going on in our own hearts with regard to our relationship with God. As Mother Teresa would say, everything begins with prayer. We can then reflect on how our relationship with God manifests itself in our love for the people around us, especially the most vulnerable. What does that look like for us today? If I made a list, what would it look like? God bless you and peace be with you!