



*To enter into this spirit, the Brothers will, first,
have a most profound respect for Holy Scripture;
in proof of this, they will always carry with them the New Testament
and pass no day without reading some of it through a sentiment of faith, respect,
and veneration for the divine words contained in it.*

R 11.1.3

De La Salle

Reflection by Br. Michael Valenzuela, fsc – Philippines

It is unfortunate that the Founder never wrote a meditation on Mary of Bethany because her devotion to Jesus exemplifies the reverence that the Founder recommends to us as regards our engagement with Holy Scripture. Mary is the one to whom Jesus discloses his mind and heart because she is the one who puts aside every other concern to sit at his feet and listen with the ears of her heart. She does not seek to control the conversation or shape its agenda. Indeed it is her eagerness to hear HIM and her receptivity to what he has to say that draws him out. The gospel writer does not record what was spoken between them, so in all likelihood it was nothing momentous. Perhaps he asked her how she was and if she had a boy she liked. Perhaps he did nothing more than narrate his stories of the road – what amused him, moved him, troubled him, warmed him, or moved him to tears – in other words nothing more – or less – than the normal exchanges that go on between good friends. But we all know that in such “insignificant” exchanges between those who love one another, what is communicated from heart to heart goes deeper than words. We may not remember what was said, but we come away from such encounters with a profound sense of the other’s presence – who the beloved is, what he cares about, what he hopes or longs for, and often – how we appear in his eyes. Even if it be in minute ways, one does not come away from such personal encounters unchanged. We carry the imprint of the other in our hearts.

We moderns do not have the privilege of being able to sit at Jesus’s feet as Mary did, but by turning especially to the Bible’s post-resurrection testimonies and reflections, we too can “choose the better part” and come to know the Risen Lord personally, intimately, transformatively as what happens between the best of friends. We do this by first trusting that the inspired words are indeed sacramental, mediating “the real presence” and redemptive activity of the Crucified and Risen One on our behalf; and secondly by bringing to our prayerful reading the same anticipation, receptivity, and loving attention that Mary brought to Jesus as he sat with her in the warmth of that kitchen in Bethany. When we do so, the words of scripture, read each day, become a doorway into our own Bethany where Christ waits to reveal himself, draw us to Himself, and transform our subjectivity through the grace of the Holy Spirit so that our own ways of knowing, trusting and loving can be conformed to his..

For Reflection:

How does the Risen Lord use scripture to form and transform you?

Do you tend to “master scripture” or allow yourself to be mastered by it? Do you approach God’s Word from a stance of control or submission?

What insights about approaching scripture can you glean from Mary’s presence to Jesus?