

Charles Wesley was an leader in the Methodist movement within the Church of England. He came from a religious background: his father and brothers were all Anglican clergymen.

Charles was born in 1707 in Epworth, Lincolnshire; and at the age of 28 sailed to America. He initially had difficulties with his ministry, and three years later experienced a strong personal conversion where he “*felt [a] renewed strength to spread the Gospel to ordinary people ... and it was around then that he began to write ... the hymns for which he would become [well-]known.*”

Charles Wesley is credited with publishing over 6,000 hymns; as well as an additional 2,000 which he wrote but never published. Some of his more famous hymns are:

*Christ the Lord is Risen Today
Come Thou Long Expected Jesus
Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Jesus, Lover of My Soul
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Rejoice, the Lord is King*

These are among the over 8,000 hymns he wrote.

One of his lesser known hymns, *Lo! I Come with Joy*, has a reference to today’s Gospel story:

*... faithful to my Lord's commands,
I still would choose the better part,
serve with careful Martha's hands,
and loving Mary's heart.*

In today’s Gospel, we hear the familiar story of the two sisters from Bethany, Martha and Mary. Martha is busy getting dinner ready while Mary *sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak.*

And from this much ink has been spilled regarding just which sort of discipleship is “best.”

Is our precious gift of time to be spent in prayer and worship; or in work and service?

Yet, Our Lord is very precise in his speech, when he tells Martha that,

*Mary has chosen the better part
and it will not be taken from her.*

But, if we immediately jump to the conclusion that poor Martha is being snubbed by Jesus, we miss the solution to this dispute.

We've all sat in elementary school classrooms where we were drilled in the fine art of forming comparative and superlative adjectives. And since English is ... FULL ... of exceptions, we know that the progression for "good" is not, "good, gooder, goodest;" but rather is "good, better, and best."

So, then the "good" part must be what Martha was doing - that is, service ... making dinner, cooking, preparing, and so on. And as Jesus tells us, the "better" part is being attentive to the presence of God in our midst - in this particular case, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity ... the Incarnate Son of the Father ... the Word made Flesh ... has just popped in with a gaggle of followers for a little something to eat. Then, we need to ask, what is the "best" part.

And, indeed - the "best" part, in my estimation, is a balance between these two things. To serve, but not to get all worked-up and flustered that things aren't going the way we'd like ... while at the same time as being attentive to the presence of God in our midst ... for us, usually in the person of our neighbor ... a spouse, a sibling, a friend, or even a stranger ... without ignoring the particular needs of the specific individual who happens to be at hand at that particular moment.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ; let us (1) first pray for the grace to really really recognize Him in this Most Blessed Sacrament ... which we have the great privilege to receive today; (2) and then, let us ask God to open our eyes to His presence in our neighbor ... those we live with, and those He puts in our daily path.

And by taking a balanced view between "work" and "worship," may we go forth from this place to bring the Gospel to the world ... and build the Kingdom of God ... in our homes, and in our communities.