

Marquand Chapel
Friday, October 21, 2005

Martha's Peace
Martha Korienek

The other day a friend of mine and I were talking.

“Martha,” she said, “you’re happier than I’ve ever seen you. What’s new?”

She’s right, I think, I am happier than I’ve been in a long time; which is out of character for me, not that I’m not usually happy, but I’m usually happy because of party or dinner that planning for or hosting.

I love having people over to my home! I spend days planning out what I’m going to serve as food and drinks and buying the best ingredients for my food.

I found this one olive oil that makes my secret recipe herb chicken taste like Heaven. I’d tell you where I bought it, but then it wouldn’t be a secret, would it?

Recently I went into the city and bought this fluffy wheat bread that was to die for, you can’t get it around here, so you’ll have to come over to have some.

I know that my guests can tell how much I love entertaining when they see how well prepared I am. And, well, I don’t mean to brag, but I have a gift when it comes to selecting the best wine. The trick is to come across as very picky when you’re buying it, and then the merchant only brings you the best to sample.

And decorating, well, few things bring me as much joy as decorating. The best is when the dinner or party that I’m hosting is for a special occasion or holiday, and has a theme. I love the hunt for finding the perfect decorations that not only match, but make the theme come alive. I feel like I’ve changed my house into a new universe for myself to live in and I’m the queen of that universe. And I love the look on my guests faces when they come in and see how perfect it all is.

We all know that having a clean house is an essential part of hospitality. I love cleaning; I love the instant gratification that I feel when I see that something that was just dirty is now clean. My favorite thing is cleaning the dishes *during* the dinner, then there’s no mess, ever. And people are always amazed that I have no cleaning to do after they leave. That’s the best feeling.

I entertain people all the time, and I stay pretty busy. I guess it’s fair to say that entertaining is my life. And, until recently, I was living what I thought was a happy life. But my friend was right, something has changed about me.

You know how you can interact with a person, sometimes for a short amount of time and they'll say something, something that may seem insignificant to them, and it changes your whole world? I didn't see it coming.

The day started out pretty normal; I invited my sister over for dinner. She's never been like me, wanting to entertain many guests who can talk to each other while I bring out elaborate course after elaborate course, no, she's always been much more happy to make a simple meal and sit with one person and talk about their lives in depth. So you can only imagine how rarely we eat together. But every once in a while, I feel like making something nice and inviting her over.

And so that's what I did last week. She asked if she could bring a guest, and I said "of course" Hospitality means not turning anyone away, right?

Since there was a new person coming, I thought that I better make something very special. I decided to make fish, since I had heard it was his favorite. And I crusted it with my very special bread and olive oil that I was telling you about before.

My sister and her guest arrived right on time, she's never understood how being late could be fashionable. But I was still working in the kitchen. Did she come and see if I needed any help? No. She and her guest just sat down and started talking.

I mean, come on, who invites a guest over to another person's house and offers no help?! It was one thing to get away with this behavior when we were kids, but we're responsible adults now! And, I might add, there was no mention of how cute the house looked or how great it smelled.

I knew that she adored this man, Jesus, that she had invited over, and would listen very carefully and do anything that he told her to do, so I thought that I would teach her a lesson.

So I walked over to him and said, "do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me."

And you know what he said?

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Worried by many things? Mary has chosen the better part?! I couldn't believe it. The nerve of this man. Who is he to tell me about my worries and distractions?

But then I saw the way that Mary and Jesus talked with each other. They were not just sharing about their days, but about what their days meant to them. And they were listening to each other and expressing a concern for what the other person had just said. I realized that I didn't know the last time I felt that cared for. And that I wanted to be with them.

And so I left the dishes in the sink, grabbed the fish without the finishing garnishes and walked over to where they sat.

We ate the fish together, not with fancy side dishes, but with our hands. I couldn't remember the last time that I had stopped thinking about the food and the decorations and the drinks long enough to sit and enjoy my company. It's quite possible that this was my first time.

I think that Jesus was right after all, I was worried and distracted by many things. Mary did know something that I didn't; that I was missing out on a lot of what life has to offer, that my time with people is a gift and not a chore. That there is joy in just being still.

And that there is a great peace to be found with Jesus.

There *is* great peace to be found with Jesus.