

## **Martha and Mary your place**

This Gospel has in it a profound challenge to all who adhere to the Christian faith.

There is of course the aspect of feminism implicit in the example that Mary shows sitting at the feet of the teacher.

It was not considered a woman's role or place to be involved in the intellectual discussions of faith. The woman was to be found serving the food as the men got involved in the more important matters of religion.

This Jesus contradicts by example. Mary has had the courage and the insight to choose the better part. Indeed Jesus in his response does not address the women but the pupil. He steps beyond even the parameters of classic feminism and expresses a self-evident truth relevant to all creeds, colours, social classes, indeed all people. Those who have the courage to choose the better part are not to be restricted by foolish custom.

But where is the actual problem.

It is obvious that male or female God created them.

That there is difference but equality.

There is human dignity which supersedes traditional prejudice and definition.

Breaking the taboos of custom

Confronting the limitations of personal and public expectation.

This is what Mary at the feet of the teacher did.

That took courage.

Too often the easy option is chosen by those hiding behind a mask of false humility.

When I was at college there was on one occasion a meeting of the Northern Bishops of England in the building that we lived in.

The meeting had little to do with us. But never the less it had been arranged that at the end of the day there was to be a celebration of mass involving Bishops and students.

We set out on the sanctuary a seat for each bishop from each diocese.

Bishops are busy people. They had other meetings to go to. Thus before the mass about half of them had made their excuses and left. The result was that we had more seats on the sanctuary than we had bishops.

Fantastically the bishops all sat at the back.  
The front row a vacant expression of false humility.  
Even the bishops hiding behind silly customs.  
Too often the easy option is chosen by those hiding behind the mask of false  
humility.  
It may even be petty but it takes courage to sit on the front row.

As a student I confessed to a wise old professor that I did not feel worthy to be a  
priest.

“Neither do I” was his reply “and neither is the Pope so have the humility to take on  
the risk of failing and get on with it.”

One of the major problems of education in DARWEN is low aspiration. Low  
motivation. It seems that many subconsciously believe that it's not their place to take  
on the roles of leadership, or the jobs of the middle class.

It takes courage and determination to break this social taboo and to emerge from the  
inhibiting atmosphere of fear of failure.

The political system that so many of the past generations of this country died to  
maintain is run by comparatively few people.

Individuals does not feel qualified to get involved, thus excusing themselves from  
the fear of failure.

It takes courage and determination to break the social taboo and to emerge from the  
inhibiting atmosphere of obscurity and make a political statement.

When have you preferred to accept the role of Martha? The comfortable role of  
custom, or social prejudice. Thus, hiding your fear and frustration behind the mask of  
conformity.

When in your recent past have you had the courage of Mary to sit at the feet of  
Christ, and in full view of everyone, take the risk of looking foolish and failing?

We fret and worry about so many things

More often than not this is simply a way to avoid confronting the challenges that  
really matter.

As Christians we are called upon to be prepared to step beyond the comfortable and  
break the social taboos of our present society.