

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

The books of Samuel have varied in name and shape throughout their existence. Originally, they formed one book, as attested to by Jerome and Eusebius. The partition into two books seems to have first been made in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament done around 250 B.C.) where these books are called 1 and 2 Kingdoms and what we now call 1 and 2 Kings were called 3 and 4 Kingdoms. The designation of 1 through 4 Kings carries through the *Douay-Rheims* translation (A.D. 1609-1610).

Our Old Testament reading for today is about David's adultery with Bathsheba. The prophet Nathan has just told the parable of the ewe lamb and David has risen to the bait. Nathan then confronts David with his sin and David's ability to acknowledge his sin is a key point. One cannot really be forgiven until one has acknowledged the sinful act.

⁷ [] Nathan said to David: "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king of Israel. I rescued you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more. ⁹ Why have you spurned the LORD and done evil in his sight? You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his wife as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites.

David had apparently taken over Saul's harem (verse 8) and now he has taken the wife of one of his soldiers.

¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah to be your wife.'

The rest of the court story (chapters 13 through 15) bears out the statement that the sword shall never depart from David's house.

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."

David's frank confession is an acknowledgment of sin "against the Lord."

Nathan answered David: "The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die.

The sin has been forgiven, but the temporal punishment for the sin still remains. The child which was born of this adulterous relationship dies.

2nd Reading - Galatians 2:16, 19-21

At the beginning of his third apostolic journey, around the year A.D. 53 (Acts 18:23), Saint Paul passed through Galatia to visit the Christian communities he had established in the area (Acts 13:14ff). The communities in question, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra, were in the southern part of Galatia. The Galatians had responded very well to Paul's apostolate and were flourishing when last visited by Paul (on his second apostolic journey) but this time he is very surprised to find that the Galatian Christians – many of whom came from a Gentile background – had been led astray by “false brethren”, Judaizers, who made out that Christians should conform to the Mosaic law and, therefore, should be circumcised and obey all the dietary regulations. When Saint Paul reached Ephesus he wrote the Galatians a letter refuting the errors involved, in which he goes into the whole question of the relationship between the Gospel and the Mosaic law, between the Old Covenant and the New. He tries to get them to see that the key point is this: accepting Mosaic doctrine would mean in practice renouncing the justification won for us by Christ – and therefore denying the value of the redemption; it would imply renouncing freedom, because they would be submitting to the yoke of the Law, which is slavery; it would mean rejecting the grace and salvation which faith in Jesus Christ brings with it. The Judaizers have ignored the decisions of the Council of Jerusalem (A.D. 50) which has gone into this whole question and with whose teaching Saint Paul is in line (Acts 15:28-29).

16 [We]

Primarily Saints Peter and Paul, but in effect all who attended the Council of Jerusalem.

know that a person is not justified by works of the law

Obedience of the ritual requirements of the Mosaic law.

but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ

For Saint Paul, “faith” is not simply belief, but is instead total personal commitment. One accepts the divine revelation made known through Christ and responds to it with a complete dedication of their personal life to Him.

and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

Implicitly quoting Psalm 143:2, Saint Paul appeals to the conviction shared by him and Saint Peter at the time of their conversion that a Jew fully realizes his inability to achieve

uprightness by the “works of the law.”

“Some say that if Paul is right in asserting that no one is justified by the works of the law but from faith in Christ, the patriarchs and prophets and saints who lived before Christ were imperfect. We should tell such people that those who are said not to have obtained righteousness are those who believe that they can be justified by works alone. The saints who lived long ago, however, were justified from faith in Christ, seeing (John 8:56) that Abraham saw in advance Christ’s day.” [Saint Jerome (A.D. 386), *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians* 1,2,16]

19 For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God.

Christ, by His total obedience of the law, became the one perfect sacrifice which could bear the covenant curse brought upon mankind by the sin of Adam. The result of that one perfect sacrifice was that heaven was opened and mankind could approach God and have their sins forgiven.

I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh,

Through baptism, one dies to sin and rises a new creation (Romans 6:3-11).

I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.

Christ now lives in him which is the perfection of Christian life.

21 I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

The Judaizers, by insisting on the legal obligations of the law, implied that Christ’s sacrifice on the altar of the cross was ineffective. Saint Paul asserts that the opposite is true: because of Christ’s surrender, the Mosaic law is no longer in effect and the grace of God shines through.

“The law could not give remission of sins, nor triumph over the second death nor free from captivity those who were bound because of sin. The reason for Christ’s death was to provide those things that the law could not. He did not die in vain, for His death is the justification of sinners.” [The Ambrosiaster (between A.D. 366 - 384), *Commentaries on Thirteen Pauline Epistles*, Galatians 2,21]

Gospel - Luke 7:36 - 8:3

Like our 1st reading, our Gospel reading for today focuses on repentance of sin. To be forgiven, sin must first be acknowledged. Then we must still live with the results of what

we have done. Grace and forgiveness are powerful, but they do not come cheaply.

7:36 A Pharisee invited him [Jesus] to dine with him,

Because of the hostility of the Pharisaic sect to Jesus, it was courageous of this one to invite Jesus to dinner. Not only does Luke frequently portray Jesus as a dinner guest (5:39; 10:38; 19:5) but on three occasions his host is a Pharisee (7:36; 11:37; 14:1). For Saint Luke, many of Jesus' most important teachings occur on the way to a meal, at a meal, or immediately after a meal.

and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. ³⁷ Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.

She intended simply to anoint His feet with a fragrant ointment, but as she leaned over, tears gushed forth, which she ingenuously wiped away with her long hair. Completely overcome, she repeatedly kissed His feet.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

While Simon silently condemns Jesus for not divining the character of the woman, Jesus proves Himself to be a prophet by reading the secret thoughts of Simon.

"Tell me, teacher," he said. ⁴¹ "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. ⁴² Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven."

We can still feel the insolent frigidity of the speaker.

He said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment.

When dining, people reclined on low divans leaning on their left arm with their legs tucked under them, away from the table. Oriental hospitality required a host to give his guest a kiss of greeting and offer him water for his feet, and perfumes.

47 So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love.

This text is a classic text for showing that perfect charity has the power of forgiving sin. Her sins are forgiven because she loves much.

But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.”

“He loves little who has little forgiven. O you say that you have not committed many sins: why have you not? by whose guidance?... The reason is that God was guiding you. ... There is no sin that one man commits, which another may not commit also unless God, man’s maker, guides him.” [Saint Augustine of Hippo (between A.D. 391 - 430), *Sermons* 99,6]

48 He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 The others at table said to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

This is an action which only God can do.

50 But he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Jesus declares that it was faith that moved this woman to throw herself at His feet and show her repentance; her repentance wins His forgiveness.

8:1 Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve ² and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

Such possession can indicate only a very serious illness. There is no reason to identify Mary Magdalene (from Magdala, a city at the halfway mark along the western coast of the sea of Galilee) as the sinful woman in the preceding epic. She is introduced here as someone new.

³ Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza,

Possibly a source of information about Herod Antipas for Saint Luke. If Chuza is the royal official of John 4:46-53, then we can understand why he would permit his wife to minister to Jesus.

Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.