

Eleventh Sunday in Ord. Time C/2013

The readings of this Sunday talk about forgiveness. They show that God forgives human beings anytime they turn away from their sinful past and look forward in building a new life with him. They invite us also to forgive each other as God does for us.

The first reading describes the affair of the king David with the wife of one of his officers. It shows that David had received many blessings from God in terms of election, security and reward.

In spite of those blessings and privileges, however, he did not hesitate to appropriate the wife of his officer and to make him killed. But, once the prophet Nathan reminded him of his fault, David regretted deeply and asked forgiveness of God who pardoned him.

What is behind this text is the idea that human beings forget easily the blessings God has bestowed on them and are envious of others. There is also the idea that human lust makes people blind and capable of committing crimes. Another idea is the truth that in spite of human sin, God does not reject anyone who asks him forgiveness and wants to repent of his sins.

This text allows understanding what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus speaks of forgiveness in the parable of the two debtors. In fact, the Gospel starts with the mention of the invitation Jesus received to dine in the house of one of the leading Pharisees.

As he was at table, a notorious sinful woman came in, washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and anointed them with a perfume she brought. That gesture scandalized the host Pharisee who started criticizing Jesus about his tenure. In reaction, Jesus gave to the host a parable in which he told the story of two debtors who owed money to their creditor. While the first had a huge amount, the second had less. As they were incapable of paying their debt, the master forgave both.

Then, Jesus asked his host an intriguing question of knowing which of the two debtors would love his creditor the most. As we could expect, he answered the one who had a big debt. Taking advantage of that answer, Jesus reminded the host that while he did not show him love since he was in his home, the woman knowing that she was a big sinner has shown great love. Therefore, her many sins are forgiven. To the woman, Jesus said that her faith saved her and she could go in peace.

After that, Jesus went on preaching and proclaiming the good news of heaven with the twelve and many of his disciples, including some women who were cured from their diseases and who supported him with their resources.

What do we learn from this Gospel? The first thing I want to highlight is the drama of self-justification. I call self-justification the attitude of the one who tries to justify his acts by referring to his own judgment. In that perspective someone can consider himself just or good because, according to his own judgment, that is what he thinks to be.

That people pretend to be virtuous and even try to justify themselves in what they do is normal. But when such people reject others because they are not like them, that is a problem. That is exactly the case of the Pharisee who invited Jesus in his home. He has

such a high opinion of himself with regard to the respect of the Law that he thinks that he is a holy person who has nothing to do with the sinners.

Then we understand why he is scandalized when Jesus let the prostitute woman touch him. And yet, there are a lot of things the Pharisee has neglected with regard to the Law. For instance, it was a custom that when a guest entered a house, he might be greeted with a kiss of peace. Then, water was poured over his feet in order to remove the dust from the streets. It was also a custom to burn the incense or to pour a drop of oil on the head of the guest.

All these things Simon did not do for Jesus. In that sense, his pretention to respect the Law is mostly external and insincere. The woman, on the contrary, has done all these things without pretention. Her deep intention was to be forgiven of her many sins and to change her life. That is the reason why she approached Jesus. Her shedding of tears was an expression of the regrets of her sins and her will to do better in the future. As she wanted to be forgiven, Jesus gave her forgiveness of sin and the peace of heart she never had before.

The second thing I want to highlight is the importance of God's forgiveness. In fact, God wants us to have eternal life and to be his children. Because that is the deep desire of his heart, he forgives us our sins so that we come to change and inherit his kingdom.

That is the reason why Jesus welcomed this woman, though he was sure that he would be criticized by the people. By doing so, Jesus does not justify the sins of those who wander far from God as though it does not matter if we sin. What he wants to show, rather, is that God gives them an opportunity to renounce their past and to turn to him.

In that perspective, by welcoming this prostitute, Jesus wants to show how salvation is so important that when someone decides to change his life, God forgives him. That is why, when we lock people in their past situation, we deny them the possibility of change and the reception of eternal life.

One of the consequences to draw from such a vision is that each one of us is important before God in spite of our sins. Even those condemned by society because of their crimes are still worthy before God. What God wants is that they change their life and receive salvation. It means also that no one has the right to depreciate himself because of his sinful past, because once God forgives us, he gives the opportunity to build a new future with him.

Let us, then, pray that we take advantage of God's grace in the sacrament of confession to return to him. Like David, let us sincerely ask God forgiveness for our sins. Let us ask him to give us the courage to change our bad habits and to come to eternal life. May God bless you all!

2 Samuel 12: 7-10, 13; Galatians 2: 16, 19-21; Luke 7: 36-8: 3



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