

11th Sunday per Annum - C
II Samuel 12:7-10, 13;
Galatians 2:16, 19-21;
Luke 7:36- 50
Little Flower - 6/12/16

My Brothers and Sisters,

If last Sunday's readings, especially the Gospel, focused on God's mercy as compassion, today's readings focus on God's mercy as forgiveness.

In today's first reading, God forgave King David. This reading offers several insights into human sinfulness and God's forgiveness. First, God, through Nathan, reminded David of all the blessings God had given him and then asked why David had rejected Him and sinned. This suggests that people who recognize and are grateful for their blessings are actually less likely to sin.

Second, God reminded David that he had committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, put Uriah in a position to be killed in battle, and then married Uriah's wife. However, at the end of the passage, Nathan told David that the Lord had forgiven his sin, not his sins. This suggests that the root of David's specific sins was his abuse of his power as king. When we look at our lives, we should always ask ourselves if our specific sins stem from one root sin.

Third, even though forgiven, sins often have long-term consequences. God warned David that the consequence of his sin would be that the sword would never depart from his house. On Mount Sinai, God proclaimed himself to be a "*a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, ... but punishing children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation for their fathers' wickedness!*" [Ex. 34:6-7]. Likewise, our sins can have long-term, even multi-generational consequences.

However, as true as this may be, it is also true that God often brings good out of bad if we allow him to do so. For example, sometimes people learn powerful lessons from their mistakes and turn their lives around. In the case of King David, the child born from his adultery was King Solomon whom God gifted with great wisdom.

Fourth, David acknowledged his sin. One paradox of God's forgiveness and mercy is that we are forgiven even before we even sin because Christ died once for all. At the same time, to be forgiven, we have to accept God's mercy or forgiveness.

In today's Gospel, Jesus revealed himself as the Forgiveness of God when he forgave the sinful woman. This Gospel, however, has a strong warning for us. Although Simon was his host, Jesus rebuked Simon for judging the woman a sinner. I would suggest that Jesus was also rebuking him for judging himself better or superior to her.

However, Jesus' most powerful statement in today's Gospel was when Jesus told Simon that "*her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love.*" In his First Letter, St. Peter wrote, "*Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins*" [4:8]. It seems to me Jesus is telling us two things. The more we love authentically, the more we will be forgiven. Likewise, the more we have experienced forgiveness, the more we will love authentically.

My brothers and sisters, today's reading from Paul's Letter to the Galatians also proclaims God's mercy. This reading, however, also challenges us. Although Paul was the strongest personality in the New Testament next to Jesus, he wrote, "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*" [RSV Common Bible, 1973]. How could he write that it was no longer he who lived but Christ who lived in him? This is the paradox of grace. In other words, the more Christ-like we become, the more fully and freely ourselves we become. The more Christ-like we become, the more we become our best selves.