

**Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)**  
2 Sam 12:7-10, 13; Gal 2:16, 19-21; Lk 7:36-8:3

We are about halfway through this ‘Year of Mercy.’ I looked up several definitions of mercy this week in preparation for today’s readings.

- compassionate or kindly forbearance shown toward an offender; compassion, pity, or benevolence
- the disposition to be compassionate or forbearing
- the discretionary power of a judge to pardon someone or to mitigate punishment
- an act of kindness, compassion, or favor
- something that gives evidence of divine favor; blessing

Think about all the times we use the word mercy in our liturgy or in other prayers.

**Penitential Rite:** Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy...

**The Confiteor:** May almighty God have mercy on me...

**Lord’s Prayer:** Forgive us as we forgive others

**Prayers for the dead:** May the soul... through the mercy of God ...rest in peace

**We’ve all heard the phrase** to throw oneself on the ‘**mercy of the court**’

David, softened by success and affluence, was captivated by the beauty of Bathsheba and committed adultery with her. From there, David, had Uriah (Bathsheba’s husband) killed, and he married Bathsheba. David had forgotten the God Who gave him prosperity, and committed adultery and murder.

It is only natural that one who is wronged should ask, “How could you do this me, after all I’ve done for you?” and that’s what God said, through Nathan. God chose and anointed David as king, protected him from being killed by Saul, gave him Saul’s house and wives in accord with custom, presented him with a united kingdom, and much more. Nathan, like Jesus, told a story to David to illustrate how important taking responsibility for sin is as a first step on the road to repentance. David wound up sincerely sorry, and so God forgave him.

Today’s Gospel is a story is both touching and tender...of Jesus’ forgiveness of a “bad” woman. A Pharisee named Simon had invited Jesus to dinner...why? We don’t know. But Jesus accepted the invitation.

A sinful woman in the city heard of the dinner and invited herself. Her crashing the party was easy since it was a custom that when a rabbi was at a meal as a guest anyone was free to come and listen to him. Luke does not mention the woman’s name or what her sins might have been. But, for some reason, she was an outcast of her society.

She had with her an expensive vital of perfume with which she intended to anoint Jesus' feet. But she was overcome with emotion and she burst into tears. Then she loosened her hair and dried his feet with her hair and anointed them with oil.

Though it all, Simon was silently condemning Jesus for not being 'prophet' enough to perceive the character of the woman. Jesus presented a rabbi-like case study about two men who owed money, one a great deal and the other less. The creditor wrote off both debts. When Jesus asked Simon which of them will love the creditor more, one can almost feel the coldness in Simon's answer: "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven."

In Jesus' time, when a guest entered a house, he could expect the host to show certain marks of respect...place his hands on his guest's shoulder and wish him peace (shalom); to wash the guest's feet with water after the dust of the dirt roads had penetrated his sandals; to place a few drops of perfumed oil on the guest's head. Simon did none of these things for Jesus.

But this woman made up for it and Jesus said her many sins were forgiven because she showed great love. Then he said to her, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Even the best of us are no strangers to sin; we don't want to sin but we do. We can deaden our consciences to sin and sometimes it might take a jolt for us to realize what we are doing. Sin leaves a bad effect and destroys something good.

I came across a study on line from 2001 by the Institute for Social Research (University of Michigan). In it, the researchers found that nearly 60 percent of the 1,400+ Americans sampled reported that they forgave themselves for past mistakes and wrong-doings. Nearly three-quarters say they felt they'd been forgiven by God. But only 52 percent say they had forgiven others and just 43 percent say they actively sought forgiveness for the harm **they** had done.

The researchers also found that middle-aged and older adults were more likely to forgive others than were younger adults; women were more forgiving than men, with 54 percent of women scoring high in forgiveness of others compared to 49 percent of men, and 48 percent of women reporting that they had actively sought another's forgiveness, compared to just 37 percent of men.

### **Where do we fall in this statistical analysis?**

Forgiveness is an attitude that sets us free. We must be willing to forgive those who hurt us, totally and unconditionally. It does not mean that we must go and tell them that they are forgiven.

Forgiveness makes us whole again. It's not just about letting him or her off the hook... it's about taking the knife out of our own soul.

If we want to be forgiven by others we must learn to forgive others. If we seek forgiveness from God, we should learn to forgive others. If we want God to overlook our weaknesses, we need to overlook weaknesses of others.

The key to forgiveness is taking responsibility for our wrongdoings and being sorry for them. We need to see and understand our situation before we can change.

The wonderful thing is that God is forgiving. We can't even begin to imagine how ready God is to forgive us. **We think in a human way and we find it hard to imagine God being so full of love and forgiveness.** It's been said that 'God created us in God's image and likeness and ever since we are creating God in our image and likeness.' To try to make us understand how loving and forgiving God is, Jesus spent much of his time ministering to sinners.

**NOTE: Today, we will baptize Fletcher Maxwell Hutchison as our newest Catholic Christian member. We welcome him as a member of God's holy people set free from sin by baptism.**

**May we seek out God's mercy and listen to God's calling to each of us to return to a time of our own innocence and strive to truly become the holy people God calls us to be.**

Gregory Cecere

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(With excerpts from Fr. JS Benitez and Fr Tommy Lane)