

## *Ordinary Time 11C 2016*

### *Forgiveness*

The Word of God, proclaimed to us today, is a Word of forgiveness. The Word of God is always a Word of Forgiveness: the forgiveness God's extends to us in Jesus Christ, and the forgiveness we ought to extend to each other.

King David knew what it meant to be forgiven. He was Israel's most important king, the king the people of Israel remembered and most revered. But David was a sinner, and he sinned grievously. Filled with lust and desire for another man's wife, he committed the sin of adultery. Then, when the woman was found to be with child, David compounded his sin by murdering her husband. Could there be a greater sinner than David, an adulterer and a murderer? But when the prophet Nathan exposed David's sin, David repented with all his heart, and God did for him what David could not do for himself. God forgave David's sin as grievous as it was.

The woman of today's gospel knew what it meant to be forgiven. And so, filled with gratitude, she washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed them with oil. She had been forgiven much, and so she loved much. But Simon, a just and pious man—although a bit too self-righteous—did not know what it meant to be forgiven. Self-righteous and indignant, he could only see a sinful woman. He could not see that she had repented. He could not see how much she loved Jesus.

St. Paul knew what it meant to be forgiven. He had spent his whole life observing the law, to the point of persecuting Jesus' followers. But when God revealed his Son to Paul, God revealed his love and mercy as well. God had already forgiven Paul through

the death and resurrection of Christ. What God now required of Paul was trusting faith in Jesus Christ. What God required of Paul was a new way of life that relied on God's grace rather than on anything Paul could do. And so in today's second reading, St Paul writes: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me." And because Christ lived in Paul, Paul now lived by faith in Jesus Christ because God loved him and forgave him.

Every day we recite the Lord's Prayer. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we recite the Lord's Prayer. We say it so often and so routinely that we do not reflect on what we are asking for. We ask that God's name be made holy. We ask for the coming of God's kingdom. We ask for our daily bread. And then, in the most daring petition of all, we ask: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Forgive us our sins *as* we forgive each other!

What power the Lord gives us! The Lord will forgive us in the very way we forgive each other. And so, if we forgive others, no matter what they have done to us, the Lord will forgive us no matter what we have done. But if we refuse to forgive others because *we think* their sin is too great, unforgiveable, we ask the Lord *not* to forgive us!

It is not the Lord who condemns us; it is we who condemn ourselves. It is not the Lord who judges us; it is we who judge ourselves. It is not the Lord who withholds forgiveness from us; it is we who withhold forgiveness from ourselves. If we are not ready to forgive, it is ill-advised to recite the Lord's Prayer. If we are not ready to forgive, it would be better not to recite the Lord's Prayer today, or any day!