

***Today's Readings (11C)***  
***Forgiveness: Freely Given***

All of today's readings teach us something about forgiveness: how God forgives us and how we are to forgive each other. In the first reading we hear of the gracious forgiveness God extended to King David after he had committed the great sins of adultery and murder. In the gospel, we see the gratitude of a woman who had been a sinner and has now been forgiven by Jesus. And in today's second reading, St. Paul speaks about "justification by faith," by which he means God has freely forgiven us and puts us in new relationship with God on the basis of trusting faith in Jesus Christ rather than something we do.

***"I have sinner against the Lord"***

King David was the greatest of Israel's kings, and it was from him that the Messiah, Jesus descended. This is why Jesus is called "the son of David." But there was a moment when the pious David fell into a grievous sin. Overcome by lust and desire for someone else's wife, he committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his soldiers. Then, after Bathsheba became pregnant with child, David covered up his adultery by murdering her husband, Uriah. It was the most sordid and shameful incident in the life of this king, who had been faithful and loyal to God. But when the prophet Nathan exposed David's sin and hypocrisy, the king repented; and because David repented, God forgave him, as grievous as his sin was.

***"Your sins are forgiven"***

The woman of today's gospel had been a great sinner, but she also repented. She knew that Jesus had forgiven her, and she was filled with gratitude for his love. To express her profound thanks, she bathed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, and anointed Jesus' feet with oil. Her love for Jesus and her gratitude for having been forgiven could not have been expressed more strongly. But Jesus' host, Simon, did not understand the actions of this woman because he had not experienced such forgiveness in his own life.

***"We have been justified by faith"***

In today's second reading, Paul summarizes his teaching that we are justified by faith rather than by works. While the language Paul uses in this passage is abstract and difficult to understand, what he writes in his letter to the Galatians is intimately related to what the first two readings say about forgiveness. Paul affirms that we are justified by God on the basis of faith rather than on the basis of what we do. This is another way of saying we are put in a right relationship with God on the basis of something God has done for us rather than anything we have done for God because all is grace.

***God's forgiveness is God grace***

God has forgiven each one of us without exception, freely and graciously in Christ. There is nothing we did to earn God's forgiveness. There is nothing we can do to earn God's

forgiveness. It is a gift, a free gift. And when we understand this we will be able to forgive others. For, if God has so generously and graciously forgiven us in Christ, we ought to forgive others *no matter what they have done to us*. For, if we do not forgive each other we disqualify ourselves from God's forgiveness. After all, every day we pray, "Forgive us as we forgive those who sin against us." *Father Matera*