

Thursday of the Twenty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 7,36-50): One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to share his meal, so He went to the Pharisee's home and as usual reclined on the sofa to eat. And it happened that a woman of this town, who was known as a sinner, heard that He was in the Pharisee's house. She brought a precious jar of perfume and stood behind him at his feet, weeping. She wet his feet with tears, she dried them with her hair and kissed his feet and poured the perfume on them.

The Pharisee who had invited Jesus was watching and thought, «If this man were a prophet, he would know what sort of person is touching him; isn't this woman a sinner?». Then Jesus spoke to the Pharisee and said, «Simon, I have something to ask you». He answered, «Speak, master». And Jesus said, «Two people were in debt to the same creditor. One owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. As they were unable to pay him back, he graciously canceled the debts of both. Now, which of them will love him more?». Simon answered, «The one, I suppose, who was forgiven more». And Jesus said, «You are right». And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, «Do you see this woman? You gave me no water for my feet when I entered your house, but she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't welcome me with a kiss, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since she came in. You provided no oil for my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. This is why, I tell you, her sins, her many sins, are forgiven, because of her great love. But the one who is forgiven little, has little love».

Then Jesus said to the woman, «Your sins are forgiven». The others sitting with him at the table began to wonder, «Now this man

claims to forgive sins!». But Jesus again spoke to the woman, «Your faith has saved you; go in peace».

«She stood behind him at his feet, weeping»

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Today, Simon the Pharisee invites Jesus to dine with the purpose of drawing people's attention. It was an act of arrogance, but his behavior when he met Jesus, did not even correspond to the most elementary good manners.

While dining, a public sinner does a great act of humility: «As she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them and poured perfume on them» (Lk 7:38).

On the other hand, when meeting Jesus the Pharisee did not give Him the greeting kiss, or water for His feet, a towel to wipe them, nor did he anoint Him on the head with oil. Furthermore, the Pharisee said to himself: "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner" (Lk 7:39). It was the Pharisee, in fact, who didn't know who He was!

Pope Francis has very much insisted on the importance of approaching the sick, thus "touching the flesh of Christ". Upon canonizing St. Guadalupe García, Francisco said: «giving up a comfortable life to follow Jesus' call, she taught the love of poverty, which permitted a greater love of the poor and infirm to serve them with tenderness and compassion: and this is called "touching the flesh of Christ". The poor, the abandoned, the sick, the marginalized are the flesh of Christ». Jesus touched the sick and He allowed them and the sinners to touch him.

The sinner of the Gospel touched Jesus and He was happy to see how her heart was transmuted. For this reason, He gave her the peace to reward her courageous faith. - You, my friend, do you come with love to touch the flesh of Christ in so many that go by your side and need you? If you do it, your reward will be the peace with God, with others and with yourself.

Other comments

«Your faith has saved you; go in peace»

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Today, the Gospel is calling us to be attentive to the forgiveness, which our Lord offers us: «Your sins are forgiven» (Lk 7:48). There are two things we Christians have to remember: we have to forgive without judging the person and we have to love a lot, for we are forgiven by God freely. It is like a double movement: the forgiveness received and the loving forgiveness we have to grant.

«When someone insults us, do not put the blame on him, but on the devil who is forcing him to insult us, and throw upon the devil all your wrath; as for the unfortunate whom the devil forces to do what he does, feel sorry for him» (St. John Chrysostom). We are not to judge the person but to condemn the evil act. The person always is the continuous object of the Lord's love, so only our acts move us away from God. We have, therefore, to be always willing to forgive, receive and love the person, while refusing those acts opposite to God's love.

«The sinner wounds God's honor and love, his own human dignity as a man called to be a Son of God, and the spiritual well-being of the Church, of which each Christian ought to be a living stone» (Catechism of the Church, n. 1487). Through the Sacrament of Penance the person has the possibility and the opportunity to rebuild his relationship with God and with the whole Church. Our reply to the forgiveness received can only be our love. Recovering the grace and the reconciliation has to bring us to love with Christ-like love. We are called to love as God loves!

Let us especially wonder today whether we realize how great God's forgiveness is, if we are those who love the person and fight the sin and, finally, if we attend with confidence to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. With the help of God we can do anything. May our humble prayer help us too.