Sunday 11th (C) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 7, 36—8, 3): 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».

Jesus walked through towns and countryside, preaching and giving the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve followed him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary called Magdalene, who had been freed of seven demons; Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Suzanna and others who provided for them out of their own funds.

«You gave me no water for my feet when I entered (…), you didn't welcome me with a kiss (…), you provided no oil for my head»

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Today, Gospel story can be noted that no one who met Jesus could do so with indifference. Why did a rabbi invite him to a nice dinner and then treat him discourteously by neglecting to give him the customary signs of respect and honor? Luke draws a sharp contrast between the arrogant and self righteous Pharisee, who keeps all the rules but does not have the sensitivity to perform the basic acts of kindness toward a guest, and the woman who has a reputation for sinfulness but who receives Jesus with loving service (cf. Lk 7:45-46). There is no doubt that she understands the importance of loving service just as the Pharisee is totally lacking of such sensitivity. The Pharisees shunned the company of “public sinners” and in so doing they neglected to give them the help they needed to find healing and wholeness.

As humans, it is so difficult to be truly loving and forgiving persons, and we are tempted to take care of the appearances and thereby to acquire a reputation for virtuous living as we continue to spoil our tendency to be judgmental and unforgiving. In many of the Gospel stories we hear about the attitude of Pharisee and publican. Now, if we try to describe what Pharisees would look like if they were living in today society, one may note, for example, that they would certainly attend Mass and fallow all the rubrics of the mass but, on the way home, they would not hesitate to do a critical and negative assessment of other people. It is indeed laudable to attend Mass and to observe all the rules of Christian conduct, but all of this careful observance is of no value if it is not accompanied by a genuine spirit of love and forgiveness.

According to Benedict XVI, «Christianity's new worship includes and transfigures every aspect of life (…). The Eucharist, since it embraces the concrete, everyday existence of the believer, makes possible, day by day, the progressive transfiguration of all those called by grace to reflect the image of the Son of God».