

11th Sun. Ord. Time (C)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
June 11, 12, 2016

Think about sin.

Think about what sin is.

Think about your own sin in particular.

Have you talked to God about your sin?

Have you felt God's forgiveness?

When was the last time you went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

You may find these questions interesting immediately after hearing a story about a dinner party that Jesus went to at the home of Simon the Pharisee. But in the story you learned that it was not just any old dinner party. Many interesting things happened, and even more interesting things were discussed. Clearly what happened and what was said became the dominant part of the event. Thus Simon and the woman who unexpectedly came into the room are the main characters of the gospel. In the first reading today, David (of Bathsheba fame) is the main character. You may remember that David had an affair with Bathsheba, and when finding her pregnant had her husband Uriah conveniently killed in battle. The young David who fought Goliath with his sling-shot certainly grew up.

With all these things going on in the Scriptures today, my opening questions are appropriate, even if we find them intrusive on our personal lives. What IS your sin, and yes, have you talked to God about your sin?

Many today are unsure of what 'sin' is, and many today seem to recognize sin easier in someone other than in themselves. And for many the word 'sin' has lost its punch. One spiritual writer, (David Stendl-Rast), states that the word 'sin' no longer communicates a serious negative condition with disastrous consequences. Everybody sins, so what's the big deal? Sin is commonplace, and rather than being alarmed and dismayed by the presence of sin, we find a strange connection and familiarity with those who sin. While it is true that we all do sin, to find such a friendly connection in this fact is certainly not of the Kingdom of God. We think and say, "That's just the way the world is; that is just the way people are."

In place of the word 'sin', Stendl-Rast suggests using the word 'alienation'. This word has a 'feel' to it: we are cut off from everything from ourselves, from others, from anything that has real meaning. Other writers like the word 'separateness', which also has the feel of being cut off, isolated, radically alone. The word 'separateness' connotes what a prisoner in solitary confinement feels there is simply no contact with anyone else, and oftentimes even no contact with the light of day. Sin is the absence of any

warmth, love, caring, and trust ... it is the destruction of our ability to relate to others, to God, and even to ourselves. One spiritual author refers to 'sin' as being frozen with little hope of a thaw.

Returning then to our earlier questions

Think about alienation in your life

Think about separation in your life

Think about being frozen in a situation, with no immediate hope of a thaw; unable to move toward anyone or anything that might give warmth, caring, and trust. Anything that might shed the light of day on your life and situation.

The word 'sin' has become tired, bland ... it no longer has a 'feel' to it, and just maybe that is one of the worst effects of sin it removes 'feeling' for God and others. It can also remove any positive feeling we have for ourselves.

And, have you talked with God about these matters?

When was the last time that you went to the Sacrament of Reconciliation to deal with this isolation, separateness, and the condition of being more or less frozen in place because of sin.

When the woman enters the room where Jesus was dining with Simon the Pharisee, all of this dynamic becomes very real. She acknowledges her alienation and separation from society ... Simon thinks to himself (but of course he is so frozen into his situation that he cannot say it) "if only Jesus knew what kind of woman this is."

Through her action of washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and drying his feet with her hair she confessed what she knew about herself and was praised for her faith: "Your sins are forgiven your faith has saved you go in peace! Who doesn't want that? Who doesn't need that?"

The best end of the story would be if her action and the words of Jesus moved Simon the Pharisee to acknowledge the same. As our text ends, we have no indication one way or the other about his future with God. In the First Scripture about the forgiveness of David, however, we do know that this was a turning point in his life. Check out Psalm 51 which David will write about himself at a later time:

*"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your loving kindness;
according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my sin.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me."*

To have one's sin ever before you is not a comfortable place, but it is indeed a healthy place to be. And one needs to be THERE before one can ever hope to be in the Kingdom.