

Ordinary 11C
Luke 7:36-8:3
June 13, 2010

This is one long gospel! I like the Gospel of Luke because he seems to be addressing the non-Jewish Christians. Those converted from the Gentiles, the Romans; those not originally accepted by the Israelites.

Throughout His earthly life, Jesus lifted up and called forth the good from everyone He met - from the most despised tax collector to the poorest serving girl. Even the condemned criminal hanging next to Him on Calvary is welcomed by Jesus into paradise for the compassion he shows Him.

As Jesus transforms the lives of these marginalized people, so we are called to do the same: to welcome and honor all the poor and struggling, all the lost and broken in our midst, and to realize, in all humility, how we are all in need of forgiveness.

In today's reading, Jesus shows compassion for this known sinner. Did you notice that in this story and in the writings of the other evangelists, He always displays an example of compassion first, and then proceeds with a teaching session.

Another example would be the woman at the well. Jesus asked her for some water, which seemed inappropriate but then He began to teach her about the Living Water.

His teachings, both by examples and by his words, always centered around, or brought everyone to the virtue of forgiveness.

Forgiveness, which is the last step / the requirement before we come to the altar of God.

To forgive and be forgiven opens the spiritual gates to the Eucharist; to the Body and Blood of our Savior.

A couple of weeks ago, Detroit Tiger pitcher, Armando Galarraga was denied a no hit ball game on his career record because of one bad call by Jim Joyce, the first base umpire. Talk about a bad rap, everyone saw that the runner was out, even the umpire that threw his arms out instead of the you're out signal.

During the news conference following the game, this young pitcher commented that he was upset when he saw the replay, and who wouldn't be. But then, he announced to the world that he gave full forgiveness for what was truly and honest mistake.

After the game, Jim sought out Armando and profusely apologized for his erroneous call. He was genuinely and visibly remorseful for that moment of misjudgment.

Every one of us has a deep need to forgive and be forgiven, to understand and be understood, to accept and be accepted. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be reconcilers, not judges; we are called to forgive, not keep score; we are called to welcome back those who want to return and to enable them to put their lives back together. To love as Jesus loves demands that we live in the optimism of faith that God always welcomes us back.

This sinful woman came uninvited to Simon's dinner party.

As a Pharisee, Simon was a highly educated and respected person // as a poor and unsavory woman, she was cast as less than human, as a sinner.

Simon judged the situation from his high-hat position of arrogance. He was sure that Jesus would treat this lowly person with the same disregard.

As I look around this morning, I sense that you all are thinking: "That Simon was a jerk!" "Simon was a Pharisee, no wonder he was stuck on himself!"

Well, hold on to your seats. You are being the Simon of 2010. You are thinking degrading thoughts of him just as he did of the woman party crasher. Wow - What a thing to say, Deacon Mickey!

Now if you're thinking about cornering Fr. Charlie after Mass, let me first explain myself.

The reason I can say this is because as I point my finger at you, there are three more pointing directly at me. So that makes me 3times more guilty, and I can accept that.

Jesus didn't judge the prostitutes, the blind beggars, the elders and scholars of the Jews. It seemed so easy for Him to say "Go, your sins are forgiven."

With the three finger system, I can triple guarantee that to ask forgiveness and to give forgiveness is a most difficult thing to do. I guess you can say that to follow the example of our Lord is easy on paper (the scriptures) but it is usually the hardest thing to do in real life.

Was that umpire sorry because he saw the error of his call or because thousands of people saw the replay? Was the pitcher magnanimous for letting him off the hook or was he looking forward to that new Corvette he received?

What I would hope to give you today, and what I hope that I will someday practice as well as I preach, is that to forgive and be forgiven is not a matter of personal fulfillment, even though that is a part of it, but it is the spiritual cleansing of the soul and spirit that will enable you and me and all God's children to be with Him for eternity.

The next time a situation arises, remind yourself to ask for forgiveness as if thousands of people are watching and give forgiveness as if there's a new Corvette on the way.