

+ J. M. J.

Being an engineer I spent some time this week trying to figure out where everyone was positioned in this story. Jesus is reclining at table, a position unfamiliar with us but it was how the Jewish people ate at festive occasions, supported by their left-hand, eating with their right. We probably visualize the woman kneeling at Jesus' feet, but that is not what is said. She is standing behind him at his feet weeping.

As we contemplate the scene we would do identify with one of the characters. We presume that this Pharisee, Simon, followed the prescriptions law. He is concerned that this woman presumably unclean from her sin is touching Jesus, which would make him ritually unclean. He calls the woman a sinner. Does that mean he thinks of himself free from sin? I suspect in our minds somehow we keep tally. If we do a certain number of good things in life or bear life's burdens well those marks go on the good side and we are well on our way and have merited heaven. In that way we can be like the Pharisee; however, St. Paul reminds us **"a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ."** It is not that we do good that makes us righteous. It is that we have that light of Christ we have received in our baptism burning brightly inside us.

Jesus' parable demonstrates to us that those who have been forgiven a larger debt love more. Here's the thing. We're all sinners. We can all weep at the feet of Jesus as the woman. St. Paul tell us in the Letter to the Romans **"all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God" (3:23)**. We don't have to worry about not having the sins to be forgiven that lead to this great love that Jesus promises. That is unless we are not in the practice of regularly examining our conscience or if we are quick to blame others for our own shortcomings and our sins are obvious to everyone but ourselves. Actually, it is as we grow in the spiritual life that our faults become magnified; we experience and enjoy God who is perfect and our sinful imperfections stand out all the more. It can be unfathomable to us but someone who was

as pure as St. Francis thought himself the greatest sinner on earth precisely because he was so close to God, precisely because he realized the debt he had been forgiven.

As a sinner we need a savior. We need Jesus. He is our only access to heaven. Our attitude towards Jesus then tells us something about where we are spiritually and where we need to be. Simon failed to give Jesus water for his feet. He failed to give Jesus a kiss. He failed to anoint Jesus' head. All these things the woman did. We then examine ourselves. When we entered church did we use the holy water to recall our baptism? If we are able, did we genuflect upon coming into the presence of Jesus? Did we prayerfully prepare ourselves to receive Jesus in word and in the Eucharist? As we come forward to receive Holy Communion do we make reverence to the body of Christ and the blood of Christ? Do we realize the one we come to see today we need more than anything else?

I heard two very different priests give two very different talks about Jesus this week. The amazing thing was that they both took very different paths and arrived at the same conclusion. Jesus wants it all. He wants to be in every part of our life. He wants every facet of our day. He wants everything we have. He wants us to share in our prayer our every thought, feeling, and desire. It is because he loves us so completely. This Eucharist we celebrate is an invitation to realize we just don't do things here or there and satisfy Jesus' love for us. It is in realizing that we actually give back to God so little that we begin to realize how much we are forgiven.

So, my brothers and sisters, as we receive the Eucharist, let's all spend those precious moments with Jesus physically inside of us and ask Jesus what were the parts of this week where I failed to let him in, where I failed to give to God my all. There is another place in the Gospel where Jesus reclines at table. It is at that first Eucharist. As we receive Jesus, in our prayer let us weep, let us kiss our Lord, let us anoint him so that our sins may be forgiven, so that we may love him greatly.

May God bless you.