

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
(2Sam 12:7.10-13 / Luke 7:36-8,3)
12.06.2016

Dear brothers and sisters,

“I am a sinner”. These words are those with which Pope Francis introduces himself. These words are true; they are words of life.

Let us come back to the story of David in our first reading. We are reminded that David was blessed by the Lord in an extraordinary way:

“I anointed you king over Israel;

I delivered you from the hands of Saul;

I gave your master’s house to you;

I gave you the House of Israel and of Judah;

and if this were not enough, I would add as much again for you”.

We know that after all that, David showed contempt for the Lord, doing what displeases Him, committing adultery and murder...

Coming back to himself, David said: **“I have sinned against the Lord”**. We recognize the words used so many times by Pope Francis.

From a human perspective, if someone acted with us as David acted with the Lord, most of us would react against such a person saying: You have taken your distance from me; please, keep it. I have done so much for you. We shall see later if anything can be repaired, but only if you repent.

God reacted differently in regard to David showing his mercy immediately and unconditionally: I forgive your sins here and now. There we see the difference between human justice and divine justice, human justice versus God’s mercy. God’s mercy is not renunciation or denial of justice. On the contrary, God’s mercy is the supreme form of his justice. God’s mercy is not cheap justice. We remember that Jesus will tell the adulterous woman after he has forgiven her: “Do not sin again”. We all know by experience that this is not an easy word to hear, an easy way to follow.

Like David, we are infinitely blessed by God. We meet with trials in life, sometimes even heavy trials. But we are also blessed. Perhaps we could take time today to put into writing some of the blessings of the Lord we have experience in our lives... We have so many reasons to give thanks to the Lord.

But like David, so very often, we forget the Lord’s blessings. Far from being aware of the Lord’s blessings and presence, we forget Him and as a result sin. We do things our way. We follow our own path rather than walk in God’s way.

To sin is not just using the Lord’s name in vain or having bad thoughts or committing bad actions, to speak modestly of the sexual deviances found in our lives at times. There is more to sin than these things.

Sin is multifaceted. It is often an excess.

We sin when what we have or crave to have is the entire focus of our attention and hinders us from remaining in the presence of the Lord and in the service of others.

We sin when what others say or think of us become so important for us that we become people pleasers and stop living as free children of God.

We sin when our thirst of power and authority leads us to take the place of God.

We sin when, as an employer, we don't pay our employees justly.

We sin when we don't give time to God in prayer every day.

We could continue the list. It is perhaps important for some people to hear that to sin is not limited to using the name of God in vain or having impure thoughts.

When we become aware of our sins, how vital it is for us to say with David: "I have sinned against the Lord". We say this in order to receive the Lord's mercy, his forgiveness. The Lord's forgiveness is always on offer to us. There is no sin too great to be forgiven. The Lord never tires of forgiving us, even if we confess the same sins over and over again. There is no limit to the Lord's forgiveness. The Lord is forgiveness; He is mercy. Forgiveness received from the Lord is a new beginning, a new birth. When the Lord forgives us, his covenant of love with us is repaired. Life energy flows in our lives again. We are restored to live in relationship with the Lord, He and us. Our relationships with others are also restored. God's mercy is source of life.

Let us now consider briefly today's gospel passage.

We see a well-known local harlot who comes to Jesus on a day Christ is invited to dine in the house of a leading Pharisee. Why does she dare to come to Jesus? Everybody knows who she is.

Probably, she had heard about Jesus. Perhaps she had observed Him. From this, she has understood that Jesus is someone who does not judge others, someone who does not put labels on others, someone who does not pay too much attention to what we may have done wrong and who is able to go beyond our faults to discern our true identity. This woman, before being a prostitute, is a daughter of God, a beloved child of the Father. Jesus' intention is not to reduce her to her sins, but to help her develop her true identity.

She knows that if she confesses her sins to Jesus, He will forgive her. She will experience the Lord's mercy. This will open up for her a new life, a new birth, a resurrection, an experience of happiness. She will discover a new meaning for her life. Jesus does not love our sins, but he loves the repentant sinners we are.

What is paradoxical in this story is that it is that woman who accomplishes the traditional duties of hospitality in regard to Jesus and not the Pharisee who believes himself to be a just and religious man. The Pharisee did not wash the feet of his guest of honour, he did not give him the kiss of hospitality, and he did not anoint his head with oil. The woman did these things. This well known prostitute is shown to be someone who is more religious than the Pharisee.

May we all have the courage to say: "**Lord, I am a sinner**". Then, we shall experience the Lord's mercy and compassion. We shall become a new man, a new woman filled with life and love, and freed from guilt and shame.