



June 13, 2010 Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

St. Anne
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY

"I tell you, her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven; where little has been forgiven; little love is shown." Luke 7: 47 *New English Bible*

Dear Friends;

Self-righteousness indignation is a symptom of a fearful person. They are afraid that they will lose what little comfort and security they have. So they fight and lash out like a cornered animal to preserve what they have known. They set up litmus tests to judge whether or not a person deserves their friendship or ire. They always first perceive the other as a threat.

The fearful will condemn, excommunicate and sling mud at anyone that does not meet the test. As Psychology Professor Eugene Kennedy says; these people "favor teachings that do not affirm humans or the universe but those that slap a moral lien on both. For them religion is castor oil for the spirit; it only does you good when it makes you feel bad."

Jesus encounters just such a person in Simon the Pharisee in today's reading from Luke. Jesus is invited to dine at his house but the invitation is not to get to know Jesus but rather assess him. Does he pass the Pharisee litmus test or not? Not knowing whether or not Jesus is "the right kind of people" Simon does not perform the customary gestures of hospitality—namely foot washing. This was an insult to his guest Jesus.

Dinners where important guests were invited, were public affairs. The whole town would have known that Jesus was coming to Simon's for dinner. And an audience would have gathered outside the door and windows to hear the conversation (John J. Pilch *The Cultural World of Jesus*). The audience would have observed the breach of etiquette and the insult it implied.

Enter in the party crasher. The unnamed woman may well have seen the slight Simon made toward Jesus. She was moved to minister to Jesus who in turn ministers to her. What made her risk the stares and hostility of those who knew her past? First, she did not let her past cripple her. Second, a sense of having been forgiven moves her to love.

How did Jesus communicate this forgiveness to her? In the last verses of today's passage from Luke we hear a list of some who followed Jesus. Accompanying Jesus were those thought to be outside the law—physically, psychologically, spiritually afflicted and all women—all who had been welcomed by Jesus. Given the biases in Jesus' culture it was a bold statement. Jesus was saying that the law that relegated such people to the realm of the unsaved was now null.

And to Simon and all the self-righteous, Jesus was saying it is not your correct thinking, your correct liturgies nor your attempts to have pure religion that will save. The only thing that saves is God and the knowledge that despite our own personal failures we are loved and forgiven. But that means we have to face our fears and can no longer be so certain of ourselves and others.

We can only approach God and each other with humility, hospitality and Love. Nothing else really matters that much.

Peace,

Fr Ron