



## CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

June 16, 2013

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Gospel reading Luke 7:36 – 8:3 *[To be read aloud]*

A Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

### Brief commentary:

Often, the popular view is that what God is interested in most is moral purity. It is true that God wants righteousness and moral uprightness, since each human being is created in God's image and is called to holiness of life. But in today's gospel we learn that the real heart of true moral righteousness and moral uprightness is *love*. Continuing the themes of Ordinary Time, today's gospel – like much of the gospels – reveals something about the meaning of who Jesus Christ is and what he is about, and the meaning of following Jesus Christ. The scene takes place at one of the most typical social gatherings of Palestinian society, a dinner. There, at the home of a careful observer of the religious and moral law of Israel (a Pharisee named Simon) an unexpected visitor arrives, "a sinful woman." At face value the religious leader and the "sinful" woman are contrasting figures, at least in the society. Yet, at the conclusion of this scene, Simon will learn how short he has fallen from God's true ideals, and how the woman, with her virtues of hospitality and "great love," reflects more those ideals and is praised by Jesus as an example to be followed. In fact, "her many sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love." Simon, as a righteous man, did not readily recognize how in need he was of God's mercy and forgiveness. In contrast the woman, realizing that she had been shown mercy and forgiven, was filled with joy and gratitude and love. She departed forgiven, justified, reconciled and in peace. Notably, in a patriarch-based society, Jesus proposes that this woman as an example. Moreover, the gospel concludes with the ongoing missionary journey of Jesus and his disciples; and among them are *women*, some of whom are mentioned by name: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and "many others." Indeed, it has been recognized that 'Jesus is the only teacher from antiquity who included women as disciples'. Mentioned in other places in Luke and the other gospels are several Mary's, Marta, and Salome. That their names are included in the gospels can only mean that they were prominent disciples of Jesus and important members of the earliest Christian communities of the Holy Land. Today's gospel is *gospel*, good news. It fills us sinners with great joy, inspires us with faith in God's mercy, calls us to overcome our prejudices and judgments, and to learn to look into the heart to see the humanity in others and to recognize the good that is even in those we consider sinners, including ourselves. We meet a Jesus in this gospel who is a visionary, a social barrier breaker, a daring person who believes in people, in their goodness, and in their capacity to respond to amazing love with amazing love.

### Today's reading offers significant messages:

- Jesus' version of moral uprightness is richer and fuller than that of Simon's. Instead of righteousness defined mostly in terms of moral purity – as important as it is – Jesus points out that at the *heart* of righteousness is *sincere love in action*. "Love covers a multitude of sins."
- Experiencing the forgiveness and mercy of God, in turn we are to respond with profound love for God and for our neighbor. Sinners can find in Jesus, more than in anyone else, their true friend, liberator and vindicator.
- Jesus sets this repentant "sinful woman" up as an example to be followed, not because of her sinfulness, but because of her daring love, which made her overcome social obstacles and ridicule in order to extend her loving gratitude publically to Jesus. As a social barrier-breaker Jesus included many women as his disciples in a world in which learning was mostly reserved for men.

### For our shared or personal reflection:

*After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.*

- What do I believe constitutes righteousness?
- To what degree do I judge appearances or a person based solely on their flaws and faults?
- How grateful am I for being forgiven and how daring is my love?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 541-550