

Thursday's Gospel: Dreaming of a New Heart

Gospel for Thursday in the 24th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 7:36-50*)

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet

with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “What is it, Teacher?” “A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?”
⁴³ Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”

Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this

woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Commentary

Today's Gospel passage recounts the scene of a woman who, distressed by her sins, dares to kneel before Jesus. A woman who cries, who kisses and anoints the feet of our Lord. A woman who breaks with her old life, who refuses to stay trapped in her past, and who allows herself to be healed. A woman who opens her heart because she wants to love truly and needs God's forgiveness to do so. A woman who dreams of a heart filled with a clean love, of a new heart that can love more and better. A woman who wants to be passionately in love.

But near her is a man, an educated man, a Pharisee, who judges her harshly, who looks down on her, who does not understand her gestures, nor our Lord's merciful look. A man who is incapable of dreaming.

And Jesus is in the middle of the two. With loving patience He explains to

Simon the meaning of what this woman has done. He explains how what hurts God the most is a heart closed to mercy, to forgiveness, that is incapable of recognizing one's own sins. For as Pope Francis said: "the privileged place for the encounter with Christ are one's own sins" (*The Perfume of the Sinful Woman*, Homily in Santa Marta, September 18, 2014).

Jesus explains why He was waiting for that woman to burst into the banquet without asking for permission and embrace his feet. For Jesus' greatest desire was to be able to tell her: "Your sins are forgiven."

This woman teaches us how to express true repentance and confess our sins and wretchedness. We need to weep for them, and make our own God's pain from our abandonments and contempt.

Jesus never stays on the surface of our lives. He goes right to the depths

of our heart to heal it so we can love anew with a clean love.

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