

Saturday's Gospel: Going to the Doctor

Gospel for Saturday after Ash Wednesday, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 5:27-32*)

After this Jesus went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples,

saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Commentary

Matthew, due to his social and economic position, most likely could afford a doctor if he needed one. Today's Gospel passage tells us that, after his encounter with Jesus, he “made him a great feast in his house.” Only wealthy people could afford an expense like that. But even if Matthew had spent all his money trying to heal his heart, he would never have succeeded. For his heart trouble was not physical but spiritual.

God's mercy is free. Forgiveness, like love, cannot be bought. We can buy a person's silence, and even ask them to try to forget what we have done to them, but we can't buy their forgiveness.

God does not set a price for us to receive his forgiveness, but he does set a condition: our repentance. And even this does not have to be perfect, as we see in the parable of the prodigal son. All that is needed is the desire to return and take the first step to begin the journey home.

In this season of Lent, the Church invites us to convert, to return home, to set out on the path back to God. The saints have taught us that this path back home is traveled many times throughout each person's life. In fact, even many times each day. The call to conversion is continuous, as is the deep longing for happiness

and self-giving that beats in the depth of our hearts.

Going to the sacrament of Penance and showing our wounds to our Lord with simplicity so that He can heal them, will help us to walk with more joy and agility along this path towards true life.

Pablo Erdozáin

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