

## **11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C: 13 June, 2010**

During the past few weeks, we have participated in some wonderfully deep and inspiring Eucharistic celebrations: Pentecost, the Most Holy Trinity, the Ascension of our Lord and Corpus Christi to name just a few. Yet, if we mention these celebrations to our non-Catholic friends, we might be surprised at the misconception on their part in that they very well may believe we are trying to earn our way into heaven. They might even emphatically say that one is saved by faith and not by works as in all of the fancy names that we give our worship services. They may even assert that we lack a fundamental grounding in Scripture and that my friend's could be nothing further from the truth.

It's correct in saying that we can't earn God's love or earn our way to salvation; however, we certainly can lose them by our actions. We also will recall that God generously gives us his love and mercy with no strings attached. All that we need is a contrite heart that is open to his invitation. And you will undoubtedly remember the words from Paul in our second reading for today: "... a person is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, ..."

So, let me remind us that we do what we do in our religious celebrations because God has loved us first and once we grasp that fact and believe that God loves us, then we can't help but love God and neighbor in return.

If we but survey our readings today, we will find God's incredible mercy spread out all across them. First, Nathan confronts David for participating in adultery and murder, and through the illumination of these sins by the prophet Nathan, David recognizes his guilt and repents. Then without any scolding or attachment of any conditions, Nathan assures David that God has forgiven him. Then if we look at Luke's Gospel, we discover that the tears of the sinful woman tell it all. She is not proud of what she's done because she knows that she has sinned. But notice that our Lord didn't ask for any explanations, rationalizations or excuses. He forgives her and frees her from

the burden of guilt that she has been carrying when he says to her: "your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Now, one of the traps that we Catholics fall into is presuming that we need to earn our salvation, or earn God's love and mercy through our rich devotional life. Over the centuries many faithful men and women have provided us with various beautiful means of praying and worshiping our God--- the rosary, novenas, statuary and art, votive candles, scapulars and medals--- and the list goes on and on. Yet, while all these things can help us in our communion with God make no mistake about it, we use them in recognition that God loved us first; not because he will love us for our pious actions. There is a huge difference between these two positions.

We should be thankful that we don't have to earn our salvation. In fact, we should be ecstatic because there's no way that we could do it. Just how many good deeds would it take: 1,000, 10,000 or 1 million, and how many prayers would we have to pray in addition to our good deeds? That's why our Lord became one of us --- to do all of that for us. And for that we should be eternally grateful.

In conclusion, I wish to offer you a challenge, and the challenge is to thank our Lord in the only way that truly means anything--- and that is by living lives of kindness, generosity and love.