

Sunday, June 12, 2016

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

Responsorial: Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 7, 11

2nd Reading: Galatians 2:16, 19-21

Gospel: Luke 7:36–8:3

Receiving the Lord's Overwhelming Mercy and Forgiveness

I have sinned against the Lord. (2 Samuel 12:13)

Sometimes our decision making is bad, and sometimes it's just plain awful. In today's first reading, David's was awful. He committed adultery with Bathsheba. Then, when he found out that she was pregnant, he tried to convince Bathsheba's husband that he was the father. Finally, he ordered the man to be killed in battle.

David's story offers us some crucial lessons. First, we should be alert. Temptation is all around, and it can be very easy to succumb to it. Second, it tells us how, once we have fallen, we can go to great lengths to cover up our sin. But that strategy often leads to more and more sin. As the poet Walter Scott wrote, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!"

But God was merciful to David, and that is the third lesson. When the prophet Nathan confronted David, he acknowledged his sin and repented.

In our opening article this month, we read about Dorothy Day, who was involved sexually with a number of men, had a child out of wedlock, and had an abortion after she became pregnant with another man. But when Dorothy turned to the Lord, God did more than forgive her. He inspired her to become a champion of the poor.

God was merciful to King David and Dorothy Day, and he is merciful to us. He is merciful to everyone who comes to him! So whether your sin is large or small, don't be afraid to confess it. Let God's mercy wash over you and set you free.

Today's responsorial psalm traces David's experience of forgiveness. He "kept silent," but it didn't help (Psalm 32:3). "I groaned all day," he confessed (32:3). But then he encountered a merciful God and discovered that he is a "shelter" to all who turn to him (32:7). Pray this psalm today, and let God fill you with his mercy and his love.

"Lord, have mercy on me. Cleanse me that I may be pure of heart."

(Many thanks to **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In today's first reading, Nathan prophetically reveals to David the magnitude of his sin: "You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you took his wife as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites." David's response is quite simple: "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan's reply is "The LORD on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die." In what way does this exchange give you insight into the Lord's mercy and forgiveness when we come to him with repentant hearts?
2. Also, in first the reading, Nathan reveals to David the consequences of his murder of Uriah. Why do you think David is still called a "man after God's heart" (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22), in spite of this horrible sin?
3. In the responsorial psalm, the psalmist speaks of the Lord's mercy and forgiveness as the fruit of his sincere repentance: "I acknowledged my sin to you, my guilt I covered not... I confess my faults to the Lord, and you took away the guilt of my sin." How would you describe the experience in your own life of the fruits of repentance and the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
4. In the second reading, Paul utters these very profound words: "We who know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. For through the law I died to the law, that I might live for God." What is your understanding of these words?
5. In the second reading, Paul also says that he has been "crucified with Christ." What do you think this means? In what ways have you been "crucified with Christ"?
6. In the Gospel, the woman with the alabaster jar performs a great deed out of love for Jesus. Then Jesus proclaims these amazing words, "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." Jesus then says to the women, "Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you." Why do you think Jesus tied the woman's "great love" for him to his forgiveness of her sins? How do Jesus' words apply to your life?
7. The meditation describes three lessons we can learn from David's story in the first reading. "First, we should be alert. Temptation is all around, and it can be very easy to succumb to it. Second, it tells us how, once we have fallen, we can go to great lengths to cover up our sin. But that strategy often leads to more and more sin." The third lesson is, "God was merciful to David" when "he acknowledged his sin and repented." What steps can you take to apply these lessons to your own life, in order to experience more deeply his love, mercy, and forgiveness? What steps can you take to give what you have received from the Lord to others?
8. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for his mercy, and for his cleansing and purifying power and love. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]