

06/16/13 ..... 11 C

-- Sometimes, the way you translate a passage can make a great deal of difference. I believe that's true with our gospel today. I'm thinking of Jesus' words about the woman who had made a display of herself.

-- In the lectionary, we hear Jesus say *I tell you her sins have been forgiven because she has shown great love*. But in the NAB, which we use for our translation, the words are *...her sins have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love*.

-- That's a significant difference, and I believe the NAB is the better translation. The lectionary could give us the impression that the woman was forgiven because of her good actions and kindness to Jesus.

-- In reality, though, the actions of the woman were a *response* to Jesus' forgiveness. She was showing her gratitude for what had taken place. Despite being a well-known sinner, she has been forgiven. Jesus' words *Your sins are forgiven* were merely a confirmation of what had already taken place.

-- St. Paul knew how forgiveness worked. He was a sinner. He knew that forgiveness was not given him because he scrupulously kept the Mosaic Law. Forgiveness came to him through Jesus Christ.

-- And so it does to all of us. Like the main characters in all three readings, though, we have to recognize our need for forgiveness. Simon the Pharisee had a tough time with that. So do many "good" people.

-- The woman in the gospel had no trouble recognizing her sin. It was obviously public, because those men at that dinner table knew about it.

-- King David had to have his conscience pricked to recognize his sin. Despite the fact that he'd committed adultery and sent the husband of that woman to his death, he was a king, and kings were used to doing things like that.

-- He needed the prophet Nathan to touch his conscience, to help him recognize his sin. Often we need good friends to be prophets to us to help us recognize our need for forgiveness of our own sins.

-- He was forgiven, though he still had to suffer the consequences from his sin. The child of that sinful union would die. We also know that forgiveness doesn't mean immunity from the consequences of our bad actions.

-- And I'm sure the sinful woman in the gospel didn't have perfectly smooth sailing after her forgiveness by Jesus. People still knew who she had been; their opinions don't change overnight. But inwardly, she was liberated.

-- The challenge for most of us, who probably haven't committed a lot of heinous public sins, is much the same challenge that faced Simon and his buddies. We need to be convinced of the great harm our sins have caused to us, to others... and how deeply they've hurt God.

-- It's relatively easy to relate to the repentance of a St. Augustine, who fathered a child out of wedlock and was a rather arrogant young man. It's tougher to relate to the great sorrow for the sins of, for example, St. Theresa the Little Flower. They would seem minor to most of us.

-- Yet she knew how they offended God greatly. We must have the same conviction about our sins.

-- The good news, though, is that God's forgiveness is always there for us. The Church gives us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to celebrate this forgiveness. Regular use of it will help us joyfully experience God's mercy.

-- For recognizing how much God has forgiven us is the key to great love. And that love is what brings us true happiness.