

06/12/16 11 C

Why does he not notice how righteous we are?

-- This may well be the unspoken complaint of Simon against Jesus in today's gospel. A woman who is known to be a sinner has come into his dinner party and made a crass display of sorrow before Jesus.

-- And Jesus has accepted her sorrow, to the unspoken but not-so-hidden disgust of many in the room. We don't know exactly what her sin was, but Simon and his cohorts didn't think much of her, to be sure.

-- That unspoken complaint may well reflect a tension in the present Catholic Church. There is a tendency for some (not all) very devout Catholics to want to guard against giving forgiveness too easily to people who have violated certain Church laws.

-- Some of this tension was evident during the discussions in the Synod meeting on the family. There was a fear that we would end up forgiving people without asking them to repent.

-- Of course, Pope Francis never put forward that idea. But he recognized that repentance is an ongoing process. Even when Jesus, in another incident, told the woman caught in adultery, *Go and sin no more*, he knew that, like all of us, she would continue to fall into sin.

-- And all of us do. Even when we make our best efforts at repentance, we fail from time to time. It doesn't matter whether we hold an important position like King David, become a great teacher like St. Paul, or are at the bottom of the social totem pole. All of us are sinners.

-- Even if we are very conscientious Catholics, if we forget this fact, we tend to be judgmental of others. We think of ourselves as "better" because we observe the law faithfully. That was Simon's failing.

-- The good news, though, is that God's grace is abundant. The woman in our gospel felt that grace in Jesus. And she responded with great love.

-- It's only when we sense our great need for forgiveness that we can partake of the fullness of God's grace. It's not enough to give lip service

to the fact that we're sinners while we think 99 percent of people in the world are greater sinners than we are.

-- Sometimes, like King David, we need a Nathan to help us realize our sinfulness. For this David standing before you, a deacon from a previous parish served as my Nathan when he confronted me about some behaviors I needed to change.

-- Many of us may need to take a second look at the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance), especially if it's been a while since we've been to it. That sacrament helps us to face our sinfulness and, more important, experience God's gracious forgiveness.

-- *The one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.* Instead of asking God why he doesn't notice our righteous deeds and actions, perhaps we need to focus upon our great need for God's forgiveness in our daily lives.

-- That's what the saints did. Whether they were like Augustine, who sowed his wild oats as a young man, or Teresa of Jesus, who entered the convent at fifteen, they all understood that they offended God greatly by their sins, whether most of us would think of them as great or small.

-- But they also knew that God's love was much greater than their sins. And that's how they became great examples of love to everyone. God calls us to do the same thing.