

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year C. June 16, 2013

Theme: One Gutsy Woman

I like to think of her as one of the **truly gutsy women of the gospel**.

She broke into an all-male dinner party at the swank home of a leading Pharisee - and she a known public sinner in the community.

With the guys all stretched out on lazy-boys munching lamb kabobs and sipping Jerusalem premium lager, she latched on to Jesus' feet and began **weeping tears of joy**.

Out came her bobby pins and hair combs, and down flowed long strands of red hair to softly wipe away the moisture of the tears from his feet.

Finally from the alabaster jar a potion whose perfumed scent soon filled the room was **lovingly, sensuously being massaged** into Jesus' feet.

Only a gutsy woman, determined and sure, would dare bring the **tools of her particular trade** out on public view.

The Pharisee host, Simon, witnessing this outrageous display in righteously disgusted that Jesus would let such a woman touch him: this clearly proves he is no prophet, he thinks.

Ah, but the prophet caught his thinking and proposed the mini-parable about the little debt and big debt as we heard:

The woman had been forgiven a huge debt of sin; she knew it and she had come to express her gratitude.

On the other hand the Pharisee **did not even recognize** that he had even a little debt in need of forgiving and thus had so little love in him.

And we heard how Jesus had to publicly embarrass the Pharisee for refusing to provide the usual marks of hospitality for a visiting guest:

water for sandal dirty feet, a welcoming greeting and a bit of oil for the beard and hair.

A huge debt forgiven and joyously, abundantly appreciated; a small debt also forgiven but not recognized or acknowledged.

A gutsy, overwhelmingly grateful woman; an arrogant, clueless Pharisee with his nose turned up at the woman.

And Jesus' summary comment: **the one who is forgiven little, loves little.**

The Pharisee Simon saw himself as pretty righteous and not much in need of forgiveness.

Because of that he had little compassion for the woman at Jesus' feet.

Jesus had no inhibition pointing out to the man that in fact **he too was a sinner.**

The story presents an interesting point of reflection for **hearers who do not like to be called sinners.**

We've largely **abandoned the confessional.**

We'd rather be called **neurotic** than sinners.

And we've devised a variety of terms to substitute for sins for our own sins and especially for the sins of public figures:

terms like mistakes, weaknesses of character, lapses in judgment, immaturities, failures of principle.

Somehow we just don't want to call a sin a sin.

But we all have done things we know are flat out morally wrong.

We have said and done things that hurt others.

We would all be embarrassed if our deepest secrets were opened for all to see and hear.

Yet forgiveness is freely, generously available to all.

We may not be notorious public sinners, nonetheless we are sinners all.

Jesus teaches in today's story that only by admitting our sin and accepting freely given forgiveness do we then have compassion and gentleness with one another.

Had Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to his home as an act of gratitude and appreciation for the forgiveness he had been granted no doubt the dinner would have been much more enjoyable for him and for Jesus.

He probably would also have seen the woman's tearful, perfumed, foot-massage of Jesus as the astounding act of love and gratitude that it was.

Brothers and sisters, may we recognize the sins we have been forgiven in God's abundant mercy.

May we have the good grace to compassionate toward one another.

The one who has been forgiven little loves little; the one who has been forgiven much loves much.