

In this holy year, the biblical readings on this Sunday cast an excellent new light for us on mercy. They reveal to us a God who welcomes and forgives. He wants at all prices to take us away from our situation of sin.

The first reading takes us back to the story of King David. He had been chosen by God to be a king. One day, he moved away from God by making two serious mistakes: adultery and the crime of murder. Listening to the prophet Nathan, David recognizes and acknowledges his sin. Then, God forgives him. God's mercy is without limit. That mercy is offered to all, even to the greatest of sinners. This reminds us that it is better to fall into God's hands instead of men's.

Now, we live in a society that accuses and condemns those who make mistakes. The media talks a lot about that. The guilty are rejected for good. Such behavior is absolutely against the Gospel: God is love for all, even for those who have committed the worst sins. With Him there is no desperate situation. All can make a conversion and live. That is the testimony from many people who work in prisons.

Saint Paul lived such a kind of conversion. At the beginning, he was a true and hard Pharisee of the Law of Moses. One day, he met Jesus on his way to Damascus. His whole life changed. He discovered a God who saves for free. It is not because of the grace of our merits or what we deserve that we are saved but because of God's mercy.

It is also that mercy that we find in the Gospel. Jesus was invited to a Pharisee's house, a man profoundly religious and faithful to Moses' law. His table was open to all, however, he was shocked by the arrival of that woman who joined them without being invited. She was seen as a prostitute. She had been following Jesus and had heard his teachings. She knows that Jesus takes away sins. Then, she looks to him because she really trusts in him.

The Gospel tells us about the tears of that woman, her kisses, and her expensive perfume. Coming to Jesus in this way, she proves a great love. But, looking closely, we understand that it is not just love that gives forgiveness but faith and trust in Jesus. Before she performed this gesture, she had heard and accepted the words of Jesus. She knows that her many faults are forgiven because she has a trust in Jesus.

The Pharisee does not understand. He says to himself that if Jesus was a prophet, he would know who that lady is; he would not allow her to come close to him because she is officially condemned for her way of life. Nowadays, there are many people who condemn or judge others like this Pharisee.

This Gospel reveals to us that we are all sinners in front of God. That sin which sticks to us is much more than an infraction to morals or to the laws; it is especially about rejecting God. We turn back on God, we organize our lives without him. However, where the sin has abounded, the grace has over abounded. The great sinner overwhelmed by the weight of his faults will be filled with relief. The forgiveness reveals the horror of the sin, but more importantly, the love of the one who forgives.

This forgiveness does not change the past but changes the future; it opens to us a path of hope. We can pay our debt by having much faith and by showing much love. Christ presents himself to all of us as the path which allows us to go to God; that path is opened even to great sinners. We should say again and again to those who do not know: God wants mercy for all. It is for us and for the whole world He gave his body and shed his blood. He wants all of us with Him because He loves all of us.

On this Sunday, the Lord Jesus invites us to the table of his word and to the Eucharist. If we want to be in communion with him, we should learn to look at others with welcoming and love just as he does. We should never forget the mercy that he showed us.

Be with us, Ô Lord, so that our whole life is conformed to your love. Help each of us be a testimony by our words and actions to those whom you put in our paths.