

Bottom line: Like David's act of adultery and murder, our sins bring the judgment of God; but if we accept the key Jesus gives us, we (like David) can be included among the just.

Some of you remember Bishop Sheen's television program: *Life is Worth Living*. He often began with a humorous story. Once Bishop Sheen told about a priest who went to hear confessions in mining community. He arrived at the mine where the men were working and the miners lined up for confession. The first one went in and told the priest how long it had been since his last confession. Then he said, "I can't think of any sins, Father. I haven't murdered anybody." A bit irritated, the priest said to him, "Look. Get out of here and make a good examination of conscience." So the man stepped out. He turned to the others who were lined up, "It's no good, boys," he said, "Father's only taking murder cases."

Well, today's first reading is about a murder case. King David had committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba, then had her husband killed so he could marry her. David thought he had gotten away with murder. He would soon learn differently. Nathan—who was the court prophet—confronted David: You might be able to escape the judgment of men, but you cannot escape the judgment of God. David had to face the consequences of his sins and the punishment was terrible. But that is not the main point. All of us have to live with the consequences of our wrongdoing. Still, David received a further word. Nathan said to him: "The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin; you shall not die."

We hear David's response in today's Psalm. If you look it up in the Bible, you will see that Psalm 32 is a "Psalm of David." It expresses his joy: "Blessed is the one whose fault is taken away, whose sin is covered." Then it adds: "Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just."

You might wonder how David could be so bold as to count himself among the "just." After all he had committed some very ugly sins: adultery and murder. In the Bible, however, justice does not mean being perfect, never doing anything wrong. Justice, rather, belongs to God. It is what God has done for us in Jesus.

We can see that in today's Gospel. A woman who is a public sinner approaches Jesus. She bathes his feet in tears of remorse. This upset the others. Now, people might think they were just a bunch of uptight guys. But, they reacted to the woman the same way we would react to someone who corrupts youth and wrecks homes. Jesus did not make light of her wrongdoing. He told her that her sins, "her many sins," were forgiven.

What does it mean that Jesus forgives sins? That is not an easy question. I grapple with it over and over. Recently, I read a little book which helped me. It has a nice title "*Ten Prayers God Always Says Yes To*." One of the prayers God always says yes to is, "God, forgive me." The author, Anthony DeStefano gives this comparison: God's forgiveness, he says, is like a man who loses a key and has to call a locksmith to make a new one. I identified with the comparison because I often lose things, including keys. Once I did lose my car key; I broke it trying to pry a cassette loose from the player. I was fifty miles from the parish and I had no duplicate. The only thing I could do was to call a locksmith. I watched eagerly as he used the two parts of the key to make a duplicate. Then he handed me the key. I put it in the ignition and—it seemed like magic—the car started.

In this comparison, the locksmith does all the work. I simply turned the key and I was back on the road. So it is with God's forgiveness. Jesus has already done everything for us. He was born among us, lived and then died on the cross. He hands us the key so we can make a new beginning, a fresh start. For that reason, Jesus says to the repentant woman, "Your sins are forgiven." He wants to say the same words to us. When we say the simple prayer, "God, forgive me," He always says "yes." Although we are far from being just, Jesus makes us right. He justifies us. Forgiveness does involve a process that includes sorrow, change of behavior, confession, retribution and absolution. Still, the moment we say, "God, forgive me," we can be confident he answers, yes. We have before us the example of the penitent woman who Jesus forgave. And like King David, we can know the incomparable joy of God's forgiveness:

"Blessed is the one whose fault is taken away, whose sin is covered . . . Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you just."

READINGS OF THE WEEK

2 Samuel 12:7-13

Galatians 2:16-21

Luke 7:36-8:3

June 16, 2013

靈 修 生 活

愛 蓋 起 許 多 罪

曹 立 珊 神 父

人，由於生性軟弱(今日集禱經)，很容易跌倒犯罪。我們當然應該仰望天主的仁慈，信靠祂的助佑，小心而勇敢地與罪惡的勢力搏鬥。但是，如果不幸，經不起三仇的挑戰，而陷於罪惡，要立刻從罪惡的泥淖裡拔出來，重新回歸天主的愛懷裡。聖經上說：「天主不棄懺悔和謙抑的赤心」(詠五一 19)。

所說的「懺悔」，不只是消極的離開罪惡，主要是積極的「愛慕天主」並活於天主。

本主日三篇讀經告訴我們：罪人所以能獲得罪赦，除了天主的「寬仁」外，罪人自己應有必須的準備，就是出自「愛心」的懺悔。為此，宗徒之長說：「愛德遮蓋許多罪過」(伯前四 8)。

讀經一：上主已赦免了你的罪，你不至於死。

懺悔的精神

有人讀了這段經文，好似不服氣的說：「達味王犯了那麼嚴重的罪----姦淫，殺人，事後只說了一句認錯的話，就獲得了寬恕。納堂先知的作法，似欠公允。」

如果我們細閱聖經對這整個故事的記述，也細讀達味所著的「懺悔」歌詞----達味痛悔七聖詠，我們就會深深了解他這短短「認罪」的話裡，蘊藏着多麼誠摯的「愛」：他不但坦誠認罪，痛悔前非，也甘心接受懲罰，赤誠信賴上主。譬如他說：

「天主，求您依您豐厚的慈愛，消滅我的罪惡。您不輕看痛悔和謙卑的赤心。」(詠五一 3,9)。

就是這「懺悔的精神」----愛，使失足犯罪的達味王，重新獲得了天主的慈愛，而寬恕了他的重罪。

如果我們再看新約上的右盜，他也只說了一句甘心接受懲罰的話(路廿三 43)，我們就不必驚奇達味蒙天主特愛了。

讀經二：我生活已不是我生活，而是基督在我內生活。

整個的皈依

自稱是罪人中的魁首(弟前一 15)，曾激烈迫害天主教會(迦一 13)，並向主的門徒口吐恐嚇和兇殺之氣的掃祿(宗九 1)，正在追殺基督徒時，卻蒙他所迫害的基督的特恩，一變而成爲「天主特選之器」(宗九 15)、「基督的大宗徒」(迦一 1；格前後 1)。

這當然是由於「天主的特別恩寵」，但也不要忽視保祿的心靈準備：首先他沒有讓「天主的恩寵落空」(格前十五 10)；他迫害教會是「出於無知」(弟前一 13)；他蒙基督召選後，立刻全心皈依祂，向祂說：「主，您要我作什麼？」(宗廿二 10)；以後他「生活不是爲自己而生活；是爲天主而生活。」(格後五 15；迦二 20)。

這一切都在說明：「愛蓋起許多罪過」。

福音：她許多的罪都得了赦免，因爲她愛的多。

聖路加福音 (七 36~八 3) 愛的多，得赦也多

德高望重、萬人景仰的師父耶穌基督，居然在眾目睽睽之下接受一個醜名遠聞罪婦的「撫愛」，難怪宴會的主人西滿大感困惑，對耶穌的「先知身份」也有了疑問(路七 39)。

耶穌洞識了西滿心中的狐疑，爲他和同席的人作了一次「機會教育」，也爲萬世萬代的人啓示了這項真理：她已不是你們心目中的罪婦，而是天主的「愛女」：「她的許多罪都得了赦免，因爲她愛的多。」(路七 47)。

愛，當然不是赦罪的原因，因爲只有天主能赦罪(谷二 7)。可是，天主的赦罪要求罪人有好的心靈準備：誠心的皈依天主。這個「皈依」聖經上簡稱「信」或稱「愛」。因此，不只聖伯多祿，聖雅格伯宗徒也說了這句話：「愛蓋起許多罪過」(雅五 20)。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 六 月 十 六 日

撒下 12:7-13； 迦 2:16-21； 路 7:36-8:3