



WHEN OUR SIN MEET'S GOD' MERCY

The theme running through all three readings today is the awesome mercy of God.

In the first reading the prophet Nathan confronts King David with his sins but he doesn't stop there. He also assures him of God's mercy. David's sins were pretty huge: adultery and murder to cover up his sin. Sex and violence. Wouldn't today's media love to cover David's story? Some comments on the story:

- Even though David had committed pretty serious sins, it seems he had no sense of his wrongdoing until the prophet Nathan helped him to see the bad things that he had done. Like David, we too could suffer from blindness to sin in our lives. We may be caught up in some pattern of wrongdoing and be totally blind to the sinfulness of our behavior or we may rationalize that our behavior as okay because 'everyone is doing it.'
- *The grace of awareness of sin.* In the famous parable of the prodigal son, there is a moment when the prodigal son 'comes to his senses' and becomes aware that he had sinned grievously against his father. Peter had a similar moment of awareness when Jesus confronted him in the courtyard during his trial. Jesus' look of love led Peter to 'weep bitterly'. Some saints used to pray for the gift of tears for their sins. For David the grace of awareness only came when Nathan told David the following parable about two men:

The Lord sent Nathan to David, and when he came to him, he said: "Judge this case for me! In a certain town there were two men, one rich, the other poor. The rich man had flocks and herds in great numbers. But the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He nourished her, and she grew up with him and his children. She shared the little food he had and drank from his cup and slept in his bosom. She was like a daughter to him. Now, the rich man received a visitor, but he would not take from his own flocks and herds to prepare a meal for the wayfarer who had come to him. Instead he took the poor man's ewe lamb and made a meal of it for his visitor." David grew very angry with that man and said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this merits death! He shall restore the ewe lamb fourfold because he has done this and has had no pity." 2 Sam 12:1-6

David is appalled at the rich man's greed saying "The man deserves to die." Then Nathan, having touched the king's sense of fairness, speaks truth to power: "*You are that man.*" The scales of blindness falls from David's eyes and he becomes aware of his sin. Like Peter, David is deeply sorry for his sins. His deep sense of repentance wins him God's mercy.

- *Nathan ministers God's mercy to David.* When David says in today's reading: "*I have sinned against the Lord.*" Nathan says to him: "*The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die.*" Sometimes we may think our sins are too big for God to forgive. I certainly have met many people who think this. Perhaps all of us may have thought this at one time or another. The great and wonderful Good News that Jesus came to bring is that no sin of ours is too big for God to forgive. God's mercy is always bigger than our sin. Our challenge is to believe this Good News not only in our heads but also in our hearts.
- *David's Act of Contrition,* Psalm 51 is considered to be David's act of sorrow after God opened his eyes to his sins. Some of the lines from this most beautiful psalm are:

*Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.*

*Wash away all my guilt;
from all my sins cleanse me.*

*Since you insist on sincerity of heart; in my inmost
being teach me wisdom.*

*. . . . a clean heart create for me, O God'
renew in me a steadfast spirit.*

- *This story calls us not to point the finger at the sins of another but to look inward at our own sins.* Reflecting on today's first reading, Patricia Sanchez writes: *As we reflect today on David's sin against God, against Uriah and against Bathsheba, and on the manner in which Nathan led his king to an acknowledgement of his guilt, this narrative invites all who hear it to look inward. Rather than focus on the sin of another, however great, Nathan's startling revelation, "You are the man!" . . . "You are the woman!" compels our attention. Just as that statement marked a decisive moment in David's life, so also can it radically affect our own. What we do next is up to us.*

Jesus' Encounter with the Sinful Woman in Simon's House

This gospel is a powerful expression of the unconditional love that God has for the sinner. The scene includes an action and a parable with the latter explaining the former. Jesus shows that he forgives the woman's sins by accepting her act of hospitality, even before he pronounces the words of forgiveness. And, as his parable explains, her love, in turn, is great because she has been forgiven much. Commenting on this gospel, John Schmitz writes:

The Pharisee represents those community members who stingily dispense forgiveness and carefully select those worthy of it. Most likely they excluded their own kind from even needing forgiveness.

The penitent woman represents those community members who openly admit their need of God's forgiveness by their attitudes and actions. Such behavior Jesus encourages and praises.

The sandwiched parable of the generous money-lender suggests that God forgives all types of people – sinners great and small. Those sinners most receptive to God's love are abundantly blessed, while those perfect Pharisee-types receive little forgiveness because of their blindness.

The women named at the end of today's reading become very important. They represent those who had received the healing touch of Jesus. A true ministry of forgiveness and healing can take place only in a community where the members receive this healing themselves before they try to extend it to others. Luke seems to indicate that these women performed this ministry quite effectively.

A few other miscellaneous reflections on the Gospel, Patrick McCormick writes:

Unraveling the web of his parable Jesus suggests that Simon is scandalized by any kindness to the woman because he believes in a God who loves little. Simon is upset with Jesus' compassion for the "unworthy" prostitute because he is convinced that should he sin in such a way, God would shun him completely. Simon is afraid of his God who loves so little and whose wrath is aroused so easily. He is annoyed at mercy shown the woman because he does not believe such mercy would be shown him, and so believing in such a God Simon too is a person of little love.

Fr. Flor McCarthy writes:

One day a friend paid a visit to Michelangelo. He found the great sculptor chipping away at a huge block of marble. The floor was covered with bits of marble and dust. It was not a pretty scene.

'What in heaven's name are you doing?' the friend asked.

'I'm releasing the angel imprisoned in this marble,' Michelangelo replied.

Simon, the Pharisee, looked at the woman and saw a

sinner who would always be a sinner. Jesus looked at her and saw a sinner who was capable of becoming a saint.

As a result of her encounter with Jesus the woman began to live a new and better life. And she would travel further down the road than any of those who were now judging her. By welcoming her as he did, and graciously accepting her gift, Jesus put wind in her sails.

Jesus says in today's Gospel 'Her many sins are forgiven her because she has shown great love' In contrast, Simon, the dutiful religious man, showed very little love. At the end of the day, the nameless prostitute received an A+ from Jesus and Simon, the religious leader, received probably a C-. We who come to church all the time, say our prayers and try to be good must be constantly aware that we are not looking down our noses on all those non-church-goers and sinners out there. Only Jesus who can look into our hearts and see our motives and into the hearts of non-religious people can judge who is closest to God.

Mary Foundation CD's

Recently someone gave me a CD from the *Mary Foundation*. On the back of the cover of the CD was the following information about the *Mary Foundation* ministry.

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Mother Nature's Bootcamp for a

Stay-at-Home Dad

On this Father's Day, we wish all the fathers a Happy Father's Day. Recently I received as a gift a small book called, *Stay-at-Home Dad* written by Brian Kantz, son of Paul and Mary Kay Kantz who are parishioners in our parish.

After their first son, Brendan was born, Brian and his wife Amy decided that Brian, a freelance writer, would stay at home and Amy, a teacher, would continue to work.

Stay-at-Home Dad is a collection of 30 columns that Brian has written for local newspapers about his experiences as a stay-at-home dad. The stories are humorous, heartfelt and thought provoking. The following story is called:

Mother Nature's Baby Boot Camp

Two days after our son was born, the good folks at the hospital made the terrible mistake of letting us take him

home. I guess my wife looked trustworthy enough. Like most new parents, we hopped in the car, buckled the kid up, started to pull out of the parking lot, then suddenly looked at each other and screamed in unison, “Ahhhhhhhh!”

“What the heck do we do now?” I recall asking. My wife sputtered out a sentence that sounded something like, “I... uh. We should...uh. Well... uh.” She didn’t have a plausible answer and neither did I. So we just drove home, giggling in newbie parent bliss.

Preparing for our baby’s arrival, we had attended a birthing class at the hospital. Meeting once a week for six weeks, we learned strange and interesting facts about babies such as: their bodies are covered with fine, soft hair called lanugo; the placenta weighs about one-sixth of the baby’s weight; and most babies look like small, cone-headed aliens when born (so don’t be alarmed).

Most importantly, my wife learned that she should calm herself during labor by breathing in a “hee-hah-hee-hah-who” pattern and I learned which chair I should sit down and be quiet in during the delivery. We didn’t find out too much, though, about what to actually do with the baby *after* he is born. You know, how to care for him and stuff. Despite that fact, at the conclusion of the last class, we were awarded the “Honorary Degree of Prepared Parent,” which made me feel proud in a wow-I’m-such-a-fraud kind of way.

Little did I know, however, that I would more than make up for my ignorance by being conscripted into something I like to call Mother Nature’s Baby Boot Camp. I had just been drafted for 30 days of intense baby training, like it or not.

Almost immediately, the drill sergeant in my head barked out his orders: *Ten-hut! Private Kantz, this baby is under your command. He can do little for himself — he’s depending on you. Don’t mess this up!* Well, that’s true. A baby can do very little for himself. I guess that’s the beauty of being a parent, though. It takes your constant effort to keep him happy and healthy. And I was ready for the challenge.

Private Kantz, you must feed the baby every oh-three hundred hours! Don’t be late!

Every three hours. That’s not bad, I initially thought. I soon realized, though, that if you do anything every three hours, you start to lose all track of time. The day becomes a blur. Your life becomes the formula. I began trekking, wild-eyed, down to the kitchen at 4 a.m. each day muttering my best Robert Duvall impression, “Ah, I love the smell of Similac in the morning.” And, yes, I was even tempted to take a quick sip, which is why I can advise all new dads: don’t try the formula, it’s not worth it. Might look like a milkshake, but it doesn’t exactly taste like one.

Private Kantz, you must wake up! Now! For the very same reason that babies eat every three hours or so, that means they are up every three hours or so. Or every 24 hours or so. It all depends on the baby’s particular mood that day. Like the newbie dad that I am, I stationed the kid’s bassinet an inch and a half from the bed so I could hawk over him all night. A small spit-up, I wipe it. A small cry from his mouth, I stick a pacifier in it. Then you realize that it’s 3 a.m. and you’re still up, so you flip on the TV and watch C-SPAN’s coverage of the Congressional debates over the government’s wild mongoose conservation efforts and other pressing issues.

Private Kantz, you must learn to identify the weapons of mass destruction in your baby’s pants. Veteran parents will back me up on this. It doesn’t take long to distinguish the infant groans for pee, gas and poop. “Oh, that’s just gas,” I soon found myself saying in mixed company. You also learn quickly with a baby boy to avoid stepping in the line of friendly fire — you know, that spray of pee that sends you diving to the floor. Let’s just say the first three times I changed my baby, I also had to change myself.

Private Kantz, you must learn to assemble the baby gear properly! Don’t leave extra nuts and bolts when putting together the crib! And you must learn to pack light and efficiently! You don’t need four suitcases full of baby stuff for an afternoon trip to Grandma’s house! Well, you get the point. Fortunately, I’ve made it through the first 30 days of basic training intact, and I feel prepared to move ahead with this baby-raising mission.

Brian Kantz is a Buffalo, NY-based writer and editor. He invites your comments and can be reached at thenewbiedad@yahoo.com. Visit his website at www.briankantz.com.

If interested in getting a copy of Stay-at-Home Dad, it is available at www.cafepress.com. Brian is donating all profits on books ordered before June 30 to First Book, a national nonprofit organization that provides free books to low-income children.

Have a wonderful Father’s Day,

