

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

Two sweethearts walked hand in hand along the riverwalk in downtown San Antonio. Both knew that their relationship was deepening and growing stronger day by day.

On that day in particular, they were talking about their future together and how they might deal with the inevitable problems and disagreements that arise in any relationship.

At one point in their conversation, she turned to him and asked very tentatively, "Could you forgive me if I were unfaithful?"

That's actually one of the issues that is covered in our marriage prep program. I would say more than half of the people responding say, "No."

They have their reasons. One of the most common is, "I don't want to give him/her any impression that it would be okay. Better to respond "no" so that he/she knows what my expectations are.

The man in the story quickly responded "Of course, I would. I love you too much not to?"

We may be a bit skeptical of the response. Did he really have any idea how much pain and suffering is involved when a marriage partner is unfaithful? Did he really understand how deep the wound goes?

Or was his response more like how Peter assured the Lord on the night before his passion that he was prepared to die for him?

There's a lot going on in the lives of us humans that makes forgiveness difficult. But the young man's response does illustrate the quality of forgiveness that characterizes God's love for us.

We don't have to worry about God being naïve about it. Time and time again he's witnessed the infidelity of his loved one, the people of Israel

That is a constant theme throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. But what is even more constant is the love with which God calls her home, speaks to her heart and forgives her.

When Jesus began his public ministry among us, his first words were, "Repent and believe the good news!"

And the good news is above all the offer of reconciliation. We are invited to believe in a God who loves us too much not to forgive us.

The story we hear in today's first reading brings this out clearly. David schemed to have Bathsheba as his own, even to the point of having her husband killed.

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Confronted about it by the prophet Nathan, he owns up to his sin and is forgiven.

Luke tells the touching story of the woman who dares to approach Jesus and bathe his feet with her tears and anoint them with ointment.

She would only do that if she had heard Jesus' preaching and trusted in his word. She had taken it as good news and was willing to risk that it would hold true.

And Jesus was true to his word. Even though eyebrows were raised because Jesus allowed her to approach, Jesus did not back down.

In fact, he compares her behavior with that of his host, who apparently felt no need to be forgiven, or even to be hospitable.

Simon may have invited Jesus into his home, but it was the woman who welcomed him into her heart. In the process, Jesus forgave her sins, blessing her faith and bidding her to go in peace.

That leaves us with the question: Hearing again today how steadfast God's love is for us, what sort of welcome do we extend to him.

Knowing that he wants nothing more than that we be reconciled with him, that we allow him to draw us to

himself, will we hold out out of fear or pride, or the desire to save ourselves?

Or will we give ourselves the gift of recognizing our need so that God's forgiveness and reconciliation will be ours, and the good news can be received and passed along.