

Dear Friends,

The little things make a big difference. We can never tell when a brief word that we say or a quick smile that we give will impact someone in a profoundly positive way. When we take the trouble to show a little kindness or courtesy to someone, it might help to cause a radical change in that person's life. Conversely, if we show disinterest or don't pay attention, we may impact someone negatively. The little things make a big difference.

Consider the gospel for this weekend. Jesus accepts the hospitality of a Pharisee named Simon, who invited him to dinner. It is not clear what Simon's purpose was in inviting Jesus over, but it obviously was not because he was enthralled with Jesus. He does not show him any of the customary courtesies offered to a guest. He did not greet Jesus with a kiss, nor did he offer to wash off Jesus' feet after having trudged along the dirt streets leading to his house. Instead, it was the woman of ill-repute that demonstrates the greatest hospitality to Jesus.

This sinful woman shows great love to the Lord. Was she passing by when she noticed that Jesus did not receive these acts of kindness? Did she feel moved to offer to wash Jesus' feet because she herself understood what it meant to be scorned in such a way? We don't know for sure. What we do know is that this sinful woman approaches Jesus, and with tremendous love filling her heart, washes his feet with her own tears and dries them with her hair. Undoubtedly, she had come to know of Jesus' message of mercy and probably heard his words of love herself. Having been so touched by his message, she could not stand it that Jesus would be treated in such a way. Responding out of love, she performs this deeply moving act. It was the combination of her humble contrition and expression of love that brought her the Lord's forgiveness.

Each of us knows what it is like to feel rejected. We also know what it is to feel isolated due to sin. Without hesitation, Jesus extends his loving hands to us to embrace us with mercy and forgiveness. When we come to him, sorry for our sins, he will never deny us the greatest abundance of His love.

It is our call - our responsibility - to extend the same love of Christ to others. The smallest act of hospitality can make a tremendous difference in the lives of others! If we were to ignore this responsibility, we would simply come to Mass, ignore the people around us, fulfill our Sunday obligation, and leave. We would be none the better for it. On the other hand, if we were to respond as Christ does, to be a loving community of faith, then we would go out of our way to be hospitable to the people around us. We would say a word of welcome to the new faces among us. We would offer to be helpful to newcomers. We would avoid making judgments about people in the pews. Jesus commended the sinful woman in the Gospel because of her great love. I invite you to join me in demonstrating great love to the people around you. Don't wait for others to take the initiative. Be welcoming as if it were Christ himself you were welcoming! God bless!

Fr. Paul