

## SEPTEMBER 19 FATHER DE CICCIO

What a beautiful story from the Gospel today

This woman, who we're told was a great sinner, receives the Lord's mercy and forgiveness. It's interesting that this woman is identified simply as a sinner.

Well, first of all, aren't we all sinners? She stands out, of course, because who knows what great sins weighed on her conscience? But everybody else who was at the table with Jesus should have acknowledged their own sinfulness, including the host—Simon. Yes, some sins are greater than others. But let's not think of ourselves as being better than anyone else, and certainly, let's not go around saying, "I don't have any sins," because we are all human beings. Only God is perfect.

The Son of God, who came down from Heaven, shows us time and again that He didn't come to judge or condemn, but to heal and reconcile what was lost.

Now this woman, who was a sinner, acknowledged her sinfulness. She was genuinely sorry and went through all these actions to demonstrate her repentance. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed his feet, and anointed his feet with ointment.

For Jesus, it would have been enough for her to simply say, "I'm sorry." And that's all Jesus asks of us too. Why is it so difficult for so many human beings to say, "I'm sorry"?

That's the beautiful thing about confession, by the way. You don't go in there to make excuses for yourself or to rationalize your actions. You are simply there to honestly say, "I'm wrong and I'm sorry."

Is it beyond our human capacity to acknowledge our faults, to admit our guilt, and to apologize? Jesus doesn't expect us to kiss his feet, wash his feet with our tears, dry them with our hair, or bring precious ointment. He just asks us to be honest and say, "I'm a weak human being. I'm at

fault. And I'm grateful that I have a God who doesn't rub my face in the dirt, but simply embraces me, forgives me, and gives me peace."

The host was very quick to judge, saying, "If this man were a prophet, he'd know who this woman was." She had a reputation. Jesus knew who she was—inside and out—because he knows all of our hearts, all of our minds, and all of our souls. And still, He welcomes us. He didn't reject this woman; He especially welcomed her because she showed great love.

Whatever her brokenness, she still had a heart, and she filled that heart with love for Jesus, whom she knew was sent by God the Father. She must have known that this man had the power to free her from her demons, whatever was keeping her prisoner to her past.

Jesus has the same power to do that for all of us. Whatever it is we carry in our hearts—our deepest, darkest secrets—things we never want anyone to know about, we can turn them over to Christ, and He won't turn us away. He will welcome us, embrace us, and forgive us.

At the end of the Gospel, Jesus says to this woman, "Your faith has saved you." All we need is an ounce of faith, and we all have it because it's a gift from God. By going to Jesus, she heard those beautiful words, "Go in peace."

We say it all the time at the end of Mass, "Go in peace, people." I hope we can hear those words as Jesus speaking to us when we've heard His word, when we've received the Sacraments, and when we've experienced His mercy, love, and healing.

May we go in peace and bring that peace to all those we encounter.