

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost IV The Interchange in Facilitating Relationships

Luke 7:36-50 and other texts give us insights into the sensitivity that Jesus had towards women in particular. It is in fact extraordinary in what we know of the culture of his time and instructive for our own time.

This is the visit of Jesus to the home of Simon the Pharisee. A courageous woman enters the male domain and begins to show great respect towards Jesus with her ministrations. Simon objects because he has heard that this woman is an immoral person. He muses within himself that Jesus cannot be a true prophet because he doesn't seem to know that the person who is touching him is an immoral person, an unclean woman in the Pharisee's eyes. Jesus' response shows that he knows her story and also the Pharisee's hypocrisy in mentally condemning her. He tells a miniature parable about a man forgiving two debtors, including one who owed more than the other. He asks which one has been forgiven the most and the Pharisee has to respond that it is the one who is forgiven the biggest debt. Jesus then points out that the woman has shown him greater care than the Pharisee who is his host. He then declares that the woman, though she is a sinner, has been forgiven because of her great love towards him. He says to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." The cleansing light of God passed through her in that moment. She must have walked out into the street with her head up for the first time in years.

The interchange between men and women is critical in relationships because there are inevitable differences of perception. The Pharisees sees the woman as a sinner, whereas Jesus sees her as someone who is redeemed because of her love for him. The woman sees judgement in the Pharisee's face, but she sees forgiveness and love in the face of Jesus. The two men see the woman's sin in a very different way. The behavior of the Pharisee has been the way of cultural history in every country in every generation. Men have been excused and women have been judged for their moral conduct. Interchange between men and women

requires great sensitivity particularly on the part of the man. Cultural conditioning has often put the woman on the back foot instead of two people meeting equally and without reserve. This is changing, but like inclusiveness, it is all too slow.

Jesus must have learned a lot from his mother about how to approach women, and it shows up in this incident. It is a great skill to learn the art of human interchange. When men learn to be vulnerable in their relationships with women by allowing them to be truly themselves, then the relationship strengthens, and love flows. But only a loving woman can teach a man that skill by building the trust that allows someone to feel safe in being vulnerable.

In this richly veined incident where both the woman and Jesus allow themselves to be vulnerable and what follows changes her life. It also allows the love of God to be seen in the interchange and in the face of Jesus of Nazareth. God became real for the woman that day.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00am
- Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Zechariah 12:8-10, 13:1

Psalm 63

Galatians 3:23-29

Luke 9:18-24