

Reader From the Gospel according to St Luke

7.36-end

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.' Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'speak.' 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.' Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Reflection Leader This is a blockbuster of a Gospel episode! We are told the name of Jesus's Pharisee host (three times!) – but not the name of the woman who is the hero of the story. Simon the Pharisee has invited Jesus to dinner but his hospitality is very lacking in warmth and generosity, both towards Jesus and towards his entourage, including the anonymous woman. What sort of Christians are we? Are we like the woman? She knows she is not worthy but cannot stay away, because she recognizes truth and love when she sees it. The aroma of her devotion fills the house. Or are we like Simon the Pharisee? He has invited Jesus into his house, but he's not sure he's comfortable with Jesus – and certainly not with his choice of followers. The fact that Jesus addresses Simon by name actually gives hope to Christians who are inclined to be "pharisaical". It indicates that Simon did learn his lesson, and so shall we. Jesus knows us and will see to it.

Prayer Leader Thank you, Lord Jesus, for all who bear witness to your mercy, in free and heartfelt devotion to you, and service of others.

Reader Lord, you challenged Simon the Pharisee to re-examine his attitudes and motives. We pray for grace to hear your words of challenge, in whatever way they may come to us, so that we can make our own free and heartfelt response.

Leader We ask this for your glory, for our own good, and for the good of all with whom we share our lives.

Lord's Prayer Leader Let us bless the Lord **Reader** Thanks be to God