

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jan 30th 2016

Recently I spoke with a person who was concerned that they had committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, a sin that Jesus said cannot be forgiven. We had a lengthy conversation but ultimately I convinced him that he has a good, contrite heart. Anyone who can be truly sorry for their sins and repent has not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. It was important to emphasize, especially during this year that Catholics are calling the “Year of Mercy,” that God’s mercy is available for everyone who truly wants it.

King David probably illustrates this truth as well as anyone. He had many faults. He committed many errors. He was a great sinner. To name only a few of his sins, he was a bloodthirsty man. He was often violent and fairly short-tempered, a rather brutal combination. He was an adulterer. He wanted to have another man’s wife and, as king, had the power to take her. When she became pregnant he tried to cover it up. When the initial cover up didn’t work, he used his office, his power, to have the woman’s husband killed. Her husband, Uriah, was a faithful soldier who loved his country and his king and that very king had him killed to cover up his sins. Through it all, David knew that he had done wrong. When he made his judgment of the wealthy man in the story told to him by Nathan, he was judging himself. He knew he deserved death for what he had done. The consequences of his sins hit him hard. He would never again be the same person.

However, in spite of his sinfulness and the fact that he would have to live with the aftermath of those sins for the rest of his life, David was a penitent man. He confessed his sin to the Lord. And God forgave him. I have a confession to make: sometimes I chafe at the fact that God is willing to forgive people of their sins. It seems too easy to me, as if people are “getting off the hook.” Oh, I want forgiveness for myself, no doubt about that. But that guy – the adulterer, the murderer, the bloodthirsty violent man who uses his office to murder the innocent? I have a friend who is spending the rest of his life in prison for sexually abusing children. On one occasion one of the most merciful people I know was talking about him and, before she realized it had said, “I hope that man burns in hell but, sadly, God will probably forgive him.” Even as the words came out of her mouth she looked at me and said, “That didn’t exactly come out right.” Yet, I perfectly understood the sentiment. Even though he is in prison, the consequences of his crimes seem to pale in comparison to the destruction that he left in his wake – the children – their families – the man’s own wife – his own children – all of the people who are trying to put their lives back together after what he did while he sits in prison, conducts Bible studies, and says that God forgave him the moment he asked for it so what is the big deal? This just doesn’t seem right.

I want God to be merciful to me. However, are there those that I believe are beyond God’s mercy or wish that they were? My thought is that, if I feel this way, I do not understand the mercy of God. I pray that Jesus will show me the way during this Year of Mercy.