

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year C

II Sm 12:7-10, 13

Ps 32:1-2, 5, 7, 11

Gal 2:16, 19-21

Lk 7:36—8:3 or 7:36-50

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It's part of the Augustinian charism to ignore the RSVP of an invitation. I can remember trying to explain this to my parents around the time of my ordination.

As the response date got closer, my dad would say,

"We still haven't heard from the friars."

To which I would reply, "Oh, don't worry, dad, you won't."

And we didn't.

Well, to be honest, some replied, but the rest we had to "guess-timate."

Thankfully, we guessed pretty well, and there was enough food and room at the tables for everyone.

While it goes against everything I was ever taught about etiquette from my parents, the longer I've been in the community, the worse I've gotten with it too!

In fact I usually breathe a sigh of relief when I see "RSVP – Regrets Only."

I'm not sure what it is about us, but it's very Augustinian just to show up and not respond.

Today's gospel account from Luke centers around RSVP-ing – who is invited to the table, and who is not – and breaking the etiquette of the day.

And we already know that when involving Jesus, that this table is usually turned.

We've come to expect the unexpected in the gospels.

We hear that Jesus receives an invitation to a Pharisee's house for dinner. Once there, an unnamed woman looking for Jesus comes to the table and bathes and anoints Jesus' feet.

There are several things of important note here:

First, this woman is a public sinner.

Besides the obvious that she was not invited to the Pharisee's house, she would not have been associated with the Pharisee to begin with, because of her status as a public sinner.

Second, she is alone, not accompanied by anyone.

This was a huge cultural no-no, since a woman was always accompanied by a man.

Third, she bathes and anoints Jesus' feet.

Upon hearing this initially, we may be somewhat bothered by it, especially because it seems like pretty odd behavior to us.

And it is – because the Pharisee should have already ensured that Jesus' feet were washed by one of his servants, as a sign of hospitality.

It is what the host in Jesus' day did.

This gospel account has rules broken all over the place:

someone who wasn't invited comes to the table;

this someone is both a public sinner and an unaccompanied woman; and

this someone shows more hospitality to Jesus than the host.

Everyone, but Jesus, is bothered by all of this.

It doesn't phase him.

Instead, what he sees is not a public sinner, nor an unaccompanied woman.

Rather, Jesus sees a person of faith, a woman with great faith,

We hear him say to her, "Go in peace. Your faith has saved you."

*It is a faith that is so bold and so determined,
that it breaks down cultural barriers and goes beyond etiquette and
expectations and just takes over.*

*I wonder if the unnamed woman even for a second thought to herself,
“What am I doing? I’m risking a lot here.”*

*Yet she was so focused on Jesus that nothing and no one could stop her.
Not even her sins prevented her from going to Jesus.*

The sight of Jesus moved her, moved her to love.

And this love was freeing – she was free from all that bound her in her day.

How about us? Are we the Pharisee? Are we the unnamed woman?

Do we box people in, sometimes even ourselves?

Or are we free and allow others to be free?

What binds us in our day?

*My sisters and brothers, we have all received an invitation from today’s
gospel – and this invitation is not exclusive; it is for everyone.*

Jesus calls all of us to live in freedom, to love in freedom.

*Augustine urges his followers at the end of his *Rule*,
to “live in freedom under grace.”*

It is a freedom to live in Christ, to live as Christ,

to allow Christ to live in each of us, as Paul tells us today.

*As we approach the table today, as we eat and drink and share in the
Supper of the Lord, may our faith be as bold as the unnamed woman,
and may it move us to say Amen and RSVP to this invitation.*