

## **Week 11 – Ordinary Time – June 13, 2010**

Sexual permissiveness has been growing in our society, but there is still a taboo against adultery. Many people think that when they are unmarried, they are free to sleep around, but once married, you need to be faithful to your spouse. I have never figured out this rationale. It seems to me that if sex outside of marriage is wrong while you are married, then it is also wrong when you are not. At least people see that commitments should be kept.

Today's first reading is about one of history's most costly acts of adultery. King David had already been married three times. One day he took a stroll on top of his house and saw his neighbor Bathsheba bathing. Bathsheba was married to Uriah, but David lusted after her and seduced her. She conceived. David got worried. So, because he was also fighting a war at the time, he put Bathsheba's husband on the front lines of battle. Uriah was killed. David married Bathsheba, who gave birth to a son. A week later, the child died. Oftentimes one sin leads to another, especially when adultery is involved, and the emotional cost runs high.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says adultery is an injustice. When you do it, you fail in your commitment to the covenant of marriage. Adultery transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and it undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based. Adultery compromises the good of children who deserve to be born within a family, and who need their parents' stable union. All that is in the Catholic catechism, but you don't have to be a Catholic to realize this. Once two people make a commitment and one of them becomes unfaithful, trust gets broken. Lust is a very strong emotion. It can afflict anyone, and you need discipline, commitment and true love to overcome its lure.

Now, we believe that God forgives the repentant sinner, and that is more precisely the theme of this reading. After David had Uriah killed, God sent Nathan to David with this message: "I know what you've done." Nathan told David a parable about a rich man who had lots of animals. A traveler comes to visit, the rich man feels obliged to serve dinner, but he can't bring himself to slaughter one of his own lambs. So he steals a lamb from his poor neighbor who had only one, kills it, and eats it with the traveler. David became enraged at this story, saying the rich man deserves to die. Nathan looked him in the eye and said, "You are the man." David repented immediately. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said, "The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin." God does forgive the sinner, but David cannot undo the harm he has done. He has forever changed the lives of good people. The all-merciful God can forgive, but that does not eliminate the wreckage that David caused.

If you are the party who has been offended, you may not feel as forgiving as God. You may find it difficult to trust the person again because you cannot read the heart the way God can. It may be safer for you to protect yourself from a person who could harm you again. In that case, you love as best you can, but your revulsion may be a sign of something more: It may signal to the

other person how serious the offense is, how important repentance is, and how careful we all should be never to compromise our commitments.