

gn: forgiveness begets forgiveness
aim: to encourage confession of sins to one another

we don't get good examples of confessing sins from country, Ch
makes it hard

I remember learning it as a child that a sign of adulthood was being able to say you're wrong. And, impossible as it is to imagine, I've made my share of blunders. On the few occasions when I summoned the courage to say I made a mistake I found my parents were right--I felt instantly mature. Now that I'm older I still make mistakes, and I still value admitting them when I'm wrong. But, you know, it's not a whole lot easier now than it used to be. If you're like me, we're still tempted to deny our mistakes, cover them up, and hope no one notices.

Why is it so hard to say those words, "I was wrong"? Of course the basic reason lies within a person--our pride in ourselves, or our fear of others. But there are external pressures. I dare say we rarely get examples of humble self-disclosure from our leaders. Our country, for example, finds it much easier to criticize the Soviet Union than to admit our own faults. We blame them for telling no one about the Chernobyl nuclear accident but we don't say we were wrong to let the news media report inaccurate details. Even in our own Church we rarely hear leaders say they're wrong. After all, the Pope is supposed to be infallible. We won't let him say he's wrong, even if he thinks he is.

I think, then, that it can be hard to say those words, "I was wrong," because even though interiorly we know they are a sign of adulthood, instinctively we know that many of our adult models never admit they're wrong in public.

What a very different scene we have in today's Gospel. An adulterous woman comes to Jesus. She cries so much she bathes His feet with her tears. She dries them with her own hair. And she perfumes them with an aromatic oil from an alabaster jar. She has spared no expense and harbored no pride to show by her actions the words, "I was wrong."

How did she do it? How did she summon the courage to confess her sin? How did she move from being an adulter^{er}, to being an adult? Luke tells us it was because she knew Jesus was dining in the house of a pharisee. The pharisees were no friends of Jesus, He had harsh words for them. But Jesus, not for the last time in his life, sat down at table to eat with an enemy. Perhaps it was that gesture of reconciliation which inspired the woman to express her faith and confess her sin. It seems to me that the conciliatory gesture of Jesus toward the pharisee makes it possible for a third party to be forgiven.

Not a bad story to think about on Fathers' Day. If admitting our mistakes is a sign of adulthood, are the adults in your family good models for your children? Can your tears bathe the hurts? Can your hair dry the tears? Can you spend your pride and pour the perfume of reconciliation on the members of your household? Are we adult enough to say, "I'm sorry. I was wrong"?