

Sunday, June 12, 2016

Tears of Sorrow, Tears of Joy

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/061216.cfm>

2 Samuel 12:7-10, 13

Galatians 2:16, 19-21

Luke 7:36—8:3 or 7:36-50

In October 2009, [Abby Johnson](#) worked as the manager of a Planned Parenthood facility in Texas. Witnessing an abortion on ultrasound convinced her of the brutality and immorality of the procedure. From that time, she has worked to uncover what goes on behind the walls of abortion facilities throughout the country. She founded the pro-life ministry [And Then There Were None](#) to reach out to those who work in the abortion industry, to help them to transition out, and to find healing and forgiveness. Her first book, [Unplanned](#), tells the dramatic story of her decision to leave Planned Parenthood and how God has used her to bring hope and healing to women like her who have been the victims of abortion.



In her latest book, [The Walls Are Talking](#), she, along with several other former abortion workers, tell the story of their experiences in the industry. One of the heart-rending stories is that of a woman she calls Angie. Coming into the clinic for her ninth abortion, she appeared to be calm, joking with the staff, and conversing easily with them up to and even during the procedure. While in the recovery room, she asked if she could see the fetus. Typically the staff would not have allowed it, but because Angie appeared to be so calm and had already gone through so many abortions, the supervisor allowed it.

Upon looking at the [twelve-week fetus](#), however, she became hysterical and wailed uncontrollably. Up to that time, she imagined that her unborn child was just a gelatin blob of tissue. Now she was confronted with the reality of the lives she ended. Because the customers waiting in the lobby were becoming agitated with her screaming, the staff got her boyfriend to go into the bathroom, pick her up off the floor where she continued sobbing, and take her out into the parking lot.

The scene is somewhat similar to the story in this Sunday's first reading from Second Samuel. To take Bathsheba as his own wife, King David has Uriah the Hittite killed. However, he is not convinced of the evil he has committed until the prophet Nathan shows it to him through the parable of the lamb. Seeing his actions for what they are, he is able to experience true sorrow for his sins. Though he must suffer the consequences of his actions, he can now find forgiveness.

To find forgiveness, we must first be convinced of our sinfulness. Mercy ultimately has no value if we are unaware that we have done wrong. Sometimes it takes a dramatic event, like Angie's experience of seeing her unborn child, or the words of a wise friend, like Nathan's words to King David, to shake us out of our denial and fully accept responsibility for our wrongdoing. Whatever the means and whoever the messenger, coming to conversion is the first step to forgiveness and healing.

The story of the penitent woman in Luke's Gospel drives this point home even further. This woman, known to all as a sinful woman, lavishes ointment and tears on Jesus' feet and dries them with her hair. Grieving over her sins, she turns to the One who has shown her mercy and finds forgiveness. The experience of God's mercy in Jesus then produces love.

Simon the Pharisee, in contrast, is convinced of his righteousness. Therefore, he cannot overlook his judgement of the woman as a sinner. At the same time, he cannot see mercy flowing from Jesus' heart and judges him unworthy of being a prophet. If Simon could be convinced of his own sinfulness, then he would be able to experience Jesus' mercy for himself and then, be capable of loving. However, he remains locked within his own smug self-assurance in denial of his need for a savior.

Like the penitent woman, our tears of sorrow can become tears of joy when we accept forgiveness from Jesus. And that joy then radiates out in love that compels us to tell our story to others so that they too can experience healing and forgiveness in Jesus. We do not know if Angie ever found forgiveness, healing, and peace after her ninth abortion. We do know, however, that it is possible. It is our job, now, not to sit in condemnation of others but to bring them to the mercy of Jesus because we have experienced his love firsthand.

Douglas Sousa, STL

NOTICES

PETER'S PENCE COLLECTION

Many dioceses will take up the annual Peter's Pence collection to support the charitable work of the Holy Father on the weekend of June 25-26. The USCCB offers parish resources on their [website](#).

FORTNIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The theme of this year's Fortnight for Freedom is Witnesses to Freedom. Each year dioceses around the country arrange special events to highlight the importance of defending religious freedom. The Fortnight for Freedom is from June 21—the vigil of the feasts of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More—to July 4, Independence Day. For more information and resources for your parish, [click here](#).

2016 DIOCESAN INFORMATION SYSTEMS CONFERENCE, June 22-25, 2016

The 2016 DISC conference runs from Wednesday, June 22 to Saturday, June 25 and will be hosted at the JW Marriott Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia. For more information and to register, [click here](#).

PRAYER

Dear Lord,
your word tells us
that we have all sinned
and fallen short of your glory.
Give us perfect and true sorrow for our sins.
May that conviction not lead us to despair,
but to reach out to you with tears of sorrow
and, receiving your forgiveness,
may we reach out to others with love,
never condemning but always welcoming,
for you have welcomed us
in the person of Jesus, our Lord.
Amen.

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