

Sunday September 11, 2022  
24rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Parishioner Reflection

*By: Mary Jean Giliberto*

No Sin Too Great

There is no sin so great that God will not forgive if our repentance is sincere. God does not count how many times we stumble; but he does count how many times we rise up and turn to Him. If we are too weak to rise up on our own, He stretches out His arm to give a helping hand.

*Don't run away shamed and disheartened.*

*Rest in my love, trust me again.*

[Fr Eugene O'Reilly, song lyrics to "Come as You Are"]

For some, the biggest stumbling block to repentance is thinking that one's sin is too great or too ingrained for God to forgive. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have several examples of people who committed grievous sins in today's readings.

In the first reading, the Israelites turned against God by worshipping the golden calf. God threatens to obliterate the idolaters, but Moses intercedes for them. Because of Moses' pleas, God relents and does not carry out the punishment He had threatened to inflict.

Today's responsorial psalm is Psalm 51, which is David's heartfelt plea to God asking forgiveness for his sins. David's sins were of a serious nature. He was guilty of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. With a humble and contrite spirit, David turns to God asking Him to cleanse him from his sin and create a clean heart. God hears and answers David's plea.

In today's second reading, St. Paul admits that he "was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant". St Paul credits the abundance of God's grace and mercy for his conversion.

The prodigal son in the Gospel wasted his inheritance in dissolute living. He runs out of money and is unable to maintain his over-indulgent lifestyle. He eventually finds himself deprived of even the basic necessities of life. He returns to his father seeking forgiveness. His father welcomes him with open arms.

All these people (the Israelites, David, St Paul, and the prodigal son) had committed great sins and all had a profound conversion experience that allowed them to leave their sins behind and turn to God. Sometimes the means of conversion comes through the prayers and pleadings of

another person, as with Moses pleading to God for mercy for the idolatrous Israelites. Sometimes the conversion is precipitated by a direct act of God, as with the vision St. Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. Sometimes the conversion is an inner realization, as with the prodigal son returning home to his father. Whatever the reason, the important point is that God forgives when we turn to him with a contrite heart and ask His forgiveness.

*... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. [Luke 15:7]*

Let us pray for ourselves. Let us pray for each other. Let us trust in God's great mercy and love and seek His forgiveness. No sin is too great. God is greater. No sin is too ingrained. God can free us.