



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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Spill and Sin, Fatherhood and Forgiveness

Reflecting on the readings and reality

The readings for 11th and 12th Sundays of Ordinary Time, June 13 and June 20, offer timely accounts of sin and repentance. David's lust for Uriah the Hittite's wife led him to murder, just as lust for petroleum-dependent lifestyles and greed for profit has led to the deaths of oil rig workers and economic and ecological destruction in the Gulf of Mexico. As the inhabitants of Jerusalem grieve over "him whom they have pierced" (Zec. 12:10), so we grieve over the effects of oil gushing from a pierced pipe.

The Scriptures allow us to express our contrition in the repentant words of Psalm 32—"Lord, forgive the wrong I have done"—and in imitating the deeds of the woman who bathed Christ's feet with her tears and ointment as a manifestation of her gratitude for Christ's transformation of her life. This woman recognized Jesus as "The Christ of God" whom Peter identifies in Luke 9:20. Jesus declares that "[i]f anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Luke reports that along with the Twelve, those who experienced Christ's healing power responded by following him.

Scripture, Franciscan witnesses, our celebration of fathers, and the oil spill in the Gulf jointly call us to follow Christ, to lose our ecologically reckless lifestyles for his sake and to imitate the loving Fatherhood of God, which provides for our needs, forgives our lusts, and invites us to abundant life. St. Anthony of Padua, whose memorial on June 13 falls on Sunday this year, modeled priestly fatherhood in his role as a reformer and inspires us to reform our individual and communal lives and our national policies. Franciscan St. Angela of Foligno's observation that "the world is pregnant with God" reminds us that as true masculinity cares for motherhood and life, we must all care for God's living presence in creation.

The end of this week also celebrates the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. For the rest of this month, let us entrust to them our prayers and deeds for the oil rig workers who lost their lives and for the fathers and families of the Gulf who have lost their livelihoods. May we find the strength to lose whatever harms our neighbors and God's creation. May our faith save us to go in peace and renew the earth.