

041810 WHAT IS THE WORST THING YOU EVER DID?

What is the worst thing you ever did, to your own way of thinking, that is? Was it some form of lie or deception? A sexual transgression? Something you stole? Something you should have done when people were really counting on you and you just didn't show up? Some occurrence where there was too much drinking? We all have things. All of us.

Peter Too. He tried. He failed. He had tried to protect Jesus in the garden even wielding a sword to ward off his attackers. But then his nerve failed him. He followed after Jesus as he was taken away but tried to stay in the shadows. But when he is suddenly accused he falters and claims that he doesn't even know Jesus. And he says this several times. Remember that Jesus is his closest friend, his mentor, his master, his very Lord. "I don't even know him." Do you think that that was the worst thing that Peter ever did?

How can you make up for the worst thing you ever did? Is it even possible? It is but it takes two to make it so. When Jesus appears to his apostles that first Easter Sunday notice that there is nothing vindictive in his words or demeanor, nothing accusatory. There is no sneering, no wagging his finger under anyone's nose with a "How could you after everything I did for you?" Notice also that Jesus does not give up on Peter or any of the apostles. He knows their sins. Actually that's all he has to work with—sinners. Make no mistake—the Catholic Church of which you and I ever members is a Church of sinners—and so is every other church. Sinners are all he has to work with.

If there is anyone who knows where we fall short, how we fall short and why we fall short, it is Jesus. However, he does not dwell on that. Jesus does not dwell on what is not. He dwells on what we are and what we are able to do. He continues to believe in us whether our sins are little ones or big ones or the worst thing we ever did.

Jesus does not equate us with the worst things that we ever did. He takes a risk. He dares to continue to believe in us despite our sins just like you do with your children, your spouses, your brothers and sisters. Jesus is not some perfectionist who has no time for the foibles and weaknesses of people. He takes the time. He makes the time.

How many chances has the Lord given you? Hundreds? Thousands? Jesus does not live in the gap between what God designed and what we do. Jesus lives in hope for us and makes his grace available to us despite our sins. That is not nothing. He believes in the power of his love to transform

us. He believes in the reality of Peter's love for him even when Peter himself is not so sure. He believes in you and me even when we fall short.

So his question to Peter is not simply to Peter. It is addressed to us too—to you and to me. “Stephen, son of Bernard, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” “Well then use that love to help people, encourage them, sustain them, feed them. Feed my sheep. In this Mass today, at the consecration tell him how much you love him. It will set you free—it did for Peter.