

## Sin Begets Sin

2 Samuel 13:15-22

Today is the feast of St. Benedict of Nursia, who modeled prayer, asceticism, and fraternity through his Rule for monks. Like the monks who battle against sloth and pride, we take up spiritual arms through our regular discipline.

Embrace the Father's love this day.

How can you show this love to those in your care?

You are in David's chaotic household. King David's sins, in particular his neglect of his children, had disastrous personal and national results. This reminds us to cherish the gift of spiritual fatherhood.

Pray that the Lord draws you out of sloth to embrace the kingly mission he has given you. Pray for the grace of freedom and humility for all Exodus Men, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience, and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins and not judge my brothers and sisters; for you are blessed forever and ever. Amen.

## A Reading from the Second Book of Samuel

Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone." But she said to him, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other which you did to me." But he would not listen to her. He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her." Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves; for thus were the virgin daughters of the king clad of old. So his servant put her out, and bolted the door after her. And Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore the long robe which she wore; and she laid her hand on her head, and went away, crying aloud as she went.

And her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Now hold your peace, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart." So Tamar dwelt, a desolate woman, in her brother Absalom's house. When King David heard of all these things, he was very angry. But Absalom spoke to Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.

## Reflection

Amnon goes from being out-of-his-mind in love with Tamar to hating her far more than he ever loved her. Instead of the sexual act bringing man and woman closer together, lust drives them further apart. Amnon rejects Tamar

and literally bolts the door of his home and his heart. After stealing her virginity, he rapes her very dignity through his hatred. Just as David's adultery led to murder, Amnon's sin leads to Tamar's devastating shame, a fate far worse than murder. Now, no other man would ever marry Princess Tamar, since she has been so violently taken in incest and then subsequently abandoned like refuse.

A similar dynamic occurs in our own cycles of sin. In temptation, sin promises to be our best friend; but after sin, it becomes our worst accuser. After sin, we either hate and blame the object of our sin, or we hate and blame ourselves. This self-hatred fuels the cycles of shame and addiction that so easily take root in our souls. Shame and self-loathing push us to return to the empty promises of sin. It happens to us as the Scriptures proclaim: "The dog turns back to its own vomit," and, "the sow is washed only to wallow in the mud." (2 Peter 2:22)

In the aftermath of the rape of Tamar, King David demonstrates a triple failure in fatherhood. The passage tells us that he was very angry, but he fails to comfort Tamar or take action to restore her dignity. It falls to Absalom to comfort his sister and provide her a home. David also fails to correct or punish Amnon. Perhaps, having committed very similar sins, David does not want to appear a hypocrite in correcting his son. Instead, he abandons Amnon in his guilt to face the wrath of God alone. Finally, David fails to recognize Absalom's righteous outrage and does nothing to prevent further sins from devastating his family.

David's sin begets sin. Whether by commission or omission, David's sins lead to more and more sins in his own life and in the lives of his children. How have your sins led to more sins? How can you learn from David's mistakes so as to become a blessing, rather than a curse, to those around you?

Think also of the example of St. Benedict, who became the father of many monks. The monks sacrifice their lives in praise of God, ordering all they do for his glory. They remind us that we too are called to give our lives entirely to God in love.

Now place yourself before God, and converse with him.

#### Week 7 Action Items

Meditate on your vocation.

Schedule fraternity time.

Reflect on your summer schedule.