

FAROL

Clement of Alexandria (150-215), theologian
Homily «How can the rich be saved?», 39-40 (©Friends of Henry Ashworth)

"Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you"

The doors are open for all who sincerely and wholeheartedly return to God; indeed, the Father is most willing to welcome back a truly repentant son or daughter. The result of true repentance, however, is that you do not fall into the same faults again, but utterly uproot from your souls the sins for which you consider yourself worthy of death. When these have been destroyed God will again dwell within you, since Scripture says that for the Father and his angels in heaven the festal joy and gladness at the return of one repentant sinner is great beyond compare (Lk 15,10). That is why the Lord cried out: «It is love that I desire, not sacrifice,» (Hos 6,6; Mt 9,13). «I take no pleasure in the death of a wicked man, but rather in the wicked man's conversion» (Ez 33,11). «Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be crimson red, they shall be white as wool» (Is 1,18).

Although only God has power to forgive sins and cancel transgressions, the Lord commands us also to forgive our repentant brothers and sisters every day. So if we who are evil know how to give good gifts (Mt 7,11), how much more generous must be «the Father of mercies» (2Cor 1,3), the good Father of all consolation, who is full of compassion and mercy, and whose nature it is to be patient and await our conversion! Genuine conversion, however, means ceasing to sin without any backward glances... By repenting we condemn our past misdeeds and beg forgiveness of the Father, the only one who can in his mercy undo what has been done, and wipe away our past sins with the dew of his Spirit.