

## **24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN THE ORDINARY TIME YEAR A 2020**

I welcome you all to the 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the Ordinary time of the Year A and the word of God reminds us of the importance of mercy and forgiveness. As we are forgiven, so also must we forgive.

The first reading from the Book of Sirach reminds us to turn over *to the Lord* our anger and desire for vengeance, for it is God's role, not ours, to punish those who have done evil. We are not to be vengeful; we are to forgive. We have been told thus, "Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven."

Note that the reason given why we should forgive, is that none of us is free from sin and guilt. We are all sinners; we have all done wrong. Yet, God forgives us, and so we too must forgive others. The Psalm proclaims that God "has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve." God treats us with forgiveness, love and compassion. We must do the same with each other.

In the Gospel, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant teaches us that God forgives us not because we deserve it, but because He is merciful. Yet, when that servant does not extend the same forgiveness to others, he gets himself into trouble, for he has not acted toward others the way the Master acted toward him. We are called to always forgive those who sin against us just like the Lord forgives us each time we go to Him. As we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Sometimes, we feel like some things are too terrible to forgive and forget. So, how do we get rid of such an emotional block that chokes off our best efforts to forgive? First, we have to ask Jesus for the grace to forgive others. Secondly, we need to recall that Jesus has forgiven us infinitely more than He is asking us to forgive others. Thirdly, we need to see our enemies the way Jesus saw His enemies - as brothers and sisters who have lost their way. "Forgive them Father dear, for they do not know what they are doing"

We must remember that when we hold onto anger and hatred, they eat away at us first. It is impossible to hate someone without suffering yourself. Forgiveness however, frees the offender as well as the one who forgives from carrying that burden. We have to let go and entrust the offender to God who is better suited to deal with them. The less blame we give to others, the less blame they give themselves.

The heart of Christianity is love, but the power of love is forgiveness. So for a Christian, forgiveness cannot be an occasional act but a permanent attitude. The Lord is asking us to forgive always. As Christians in the world, we live in mercy and we long for justice, but we must entrust final justice of others always to God. Forgiveness requires that we address the situation in a positive and loving way, instead of addressing it with hatred and a desire for revenge.

May we pray with St. Francis our patron: ***Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.***