

dreizehnter (13th) September, 2020.

Sonntag, vierundzwanzigster in der Woche gewöhnlich.

INTRODUCTION:

The Scripture Readings for this Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time get us thinking about the mystery of Faith. What is revealed to us is the importance of being of like-mind with Christ if we are to be saved from our human frailty and so reach a heavenly, eternal existence.

SCRIPTURE NOTE

First Reading (Ecclesiastes (Sirach) 27:30-28:7). It is a human reaction to hold grudges against those who have hurt us. But Ecclesiastes insists that wrath and anger are hateful things. He also admonishes us to show mercy to others, since we look to God for mercy for ourselves.

It we harbour resentment and anger against those who have hurt us, how can we demand compassion from God. And if we show no pity for a fellow human being, how can we plead for pity for ourselves?

All of this ties in closely with the theme of the Gospel, where Jesus warns that an unforgiving spirit will come between us and the God we worship.

Gospel (Matthew 18:21-35). Last Sunday's Gospel talked about the duty a Christian has to correct an erring brother or sister. The focus now shifts to the brother who is not recalcitrant, but who sins often, and therefore needs forgiveness often.

The position of the servant in Jesus' story is absolutely hopeless. He owes the king so much money that even if he worked forever, he would not be able to repay him. This is the strong point of the story. All he can do is plead for his mercy.

Our situation before God is similar to that of the servant. We can't win God's forgiveness. All we can do is plead for it. But God is generous with his forgiveness. We then must be willing to extend to others the forgiveness God has extended to us.

To refuse to forgive those who have sinned against us would be to exclude ourselves from receiving God's forgiveness for our own sins. We must forgive, not seven times, but seventy times seven times. This means that forgiveness must be unlimited.

All this has a very real application in church life. The thing that is most likely to turn people away from the Church is when they don't find forgiveness there.

Second Reading (Romans 14:7-9). As Christians, our living and dying, that is, our whole entire existence, must be for Christ and for one another.

PRAYER

Lord, remember not only people of good will,
but also people of ill will.
Do not remember only the sufferings
that have been inflicted on us,
but remember too the fruit we have brought
as a result of this suffering:
the comradeship and loyalty,
the humility and courage,
the generosity and greatness of heart
that has grown out of it.
And when they come to judgement,
let all the fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.

Prayer found in Auschwitz

SAINTS OF THE WEEK

Monday, 14th of September: Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Tuesday, 15th of September: Memorial in honour of Our Lady of Sorrows

*Wednesday, 16th of September: Memorial in honour of Saints Cornelius (Pope)
and Cyprian (Bishop), Martyrs.*

*Thursday, 17th of September: Optional Memorial of saint Robert Bellarmine,
Bishop and Doctor.*

Saturday, 19th of September: Optional Memorial of Saint Januarius, Bishop and Martyr.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY, 20TH OF SEPTEMBER 2020.
WEEK 25 OF ORDINARY TIME.

Theme: The workers in the vineyard

First Reading – Isaiah 55:6-9.

Second Reading – Philippians 1:20-24,27.

Gospel, Matthew 20:1-16.

Homily for Sunday, 13th of September 2020 – Week 24 of Ordinary Time (Year A).

Theme: The Unforgiving Servant

If you were given your choice in our Lord's time between a talent and a denarius, which of them would you pick? You would be wise to pick the talent, because it was the largest unit of currency in use in the Middle East. If you happened to have ten thousand of them, you would be a multi-billionaire. Counting your money would be like going out into space; there would never be an end to it. A denarius, on the other hand, was a labourer's wage for a day. Even if you had a hundred of them, you'd be going nowhere at all. Your biggest problem would be staying alive.

What in God's name was wrong with the unforgiving servant? How could a man who was forgiven so much, be so unforgiving about so little? Did he not realize, as the Gospel points out, that he was bound to have pity on his fellow servant just as his master had pity on him? No doubt about it, Our Lord came across some very strange people in his time.

The real world, I'm sorry to say, is precisely where he is. Every time we look in the mirror, we're likely to get a glimpse of him. The trouble is that we may not recognize him, because what we'll see before us is an idealized image of ourselves. Just like the servant in the Gospel, we are recipients of our master's forgiveness.

Why do we find it so difficult to forgive? Because the demands of justice may have to be satisfied first? Or because that's the way we feel? Unless the injury we've suffered is trivial, there is no such thing as instant forgiveness. The process of forgiving takes time – time to adjust, to recover, to let the emotions subside, to work through the anger or the pain. If a life-long friend betrays us, for instance, or if a married partner is unfaithful. The words of forgiveness may come, but it may take months or years to inhabit them. For most of us, forgiveness is a slow journey.

The important thing about forgiveness is our willingness to get there. The one thing that must never happen is that our hurt hardens to hate. But forgiveness and realism must go hand in hand. The journey to Judea was over hilly country (*Luke 1:39*). The journey to forgiveness is over hilly country as well.

I once recommended a young man to be accepted as a boatbuilding apprentice, for which he proved to be unsuited. I had to change my mind. I expected him to be bitter about it. I was amazed and relieved to discover, subsequently, that he was not bitter at all. I had been completely and unexpectedly forgiven.

Because of the young man's attitude and the way he coped with hurt, I understood better than I otherwise would have, for forgiveness is, of its essence, is something we are meant to share. The young man in question discovered his vocational calling in life, and became an accomplished design engineer in the marine field.

What God passes on to us, we are meant to pass on to others. "Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I have pity on you?" (*Matthew 18:33*). As we've seen already, it's not an easy thing to do. We need that challenge at the end of the 'Our Father' to move us purposefully along: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.' May that prayer bring us ever closer to forgiveness. May it bring us nearer, phrase by phrase, to journey's end!

Prayerfully,

Fr. Brian

