

## Homily 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year A 2020

Nikos Kazantzakis a famous Greek writer (*Zorba the Greek*) said that he was full of curiosity in his youth. While visiting an orthodox monastery he asked an elderly monk: “Do you still wrestle with the devil?” “No,” replied the old monk, “I used to, when I was younger, but now I’ve grown old and tired and the devil has grown old and tired with me.” “So,” Kazantzakis said, “your life is easy then? No more big struggles.” “Oh, no!” replied the old man, “now it’s worse. Now I wrestle with God!” “You wrestle with God,” replied Kazantzakis, rather surprised, “and you hope to win?” “No,” said the old monk, “I wrestle with God and I hope to lose!”

Wrestling with God is much harder than wrestling with the Devil because there comes a time in life when we realise the harm sin and evil cause us and others. We need only reflect on how we have harmed our planet! Our struggles with God revolve around the indiscriminate lavishness of his love, mercy and compassion. Think of the elder son of the prodigal father towards the son who had squandered his early life; the workers in the vineyard who had worked all day towards those who had only worked one hour receiving the same wage.

But it also works the other way round. If we have spent life facing suffering, hardship, and self-giving and our only reward is still further hardship, trauma and loss. Yet others, for whom God has no place in their lives, seem to have everything going for them. Because of the prodigal forgiveness and mercy of God, they will receive the same reward as ourselves even if they only say yes to God with their last breath.

Yet, however hard it is to forgive certain people, the one most difficult to forgive is **ourselves**. We always believe we can be better, be more generous, more loving, more self-giving, more caring, but we fail. So, 70 times 7 doesn’t seem too much because we have to continually forgive ourselves for not being the person we want to be or the person we believe God wants us to be. The greatest lesson in God’s forgiveness is that he accepts us just as we are, warts and all. In opening ourselves to this forgiveness, we are healed and made whole and instilled with an even greater love for God. Isn’t God’s forgiveness just the greatest wonder of the world!!! Some wisdom from Richard Rohr:-

*“Many of us were taught that God would love us if and when we change. In fact, God loves you so that you can change. What empowers change, what makes you desirous of change is the experience of love. It is that inherent experience of love that becomes the engine of change.”*

*“. . . every time God forgives us, God is saying that God's own rules do not matter as much as the relationship that God wants to create with us.”*

*“Until we learn to love others as ourselves, it's difficult to blame broken people who desperately try to affirm themselves when no one else will.”*

Tourist: Hello. Do you farm around here?  
Cornish Farmer: Aye.  
Tourist: Fantastic day isn't it?

Cornish Farmer:

Aye.

Tourist:

Have you lived here all of your life?

Cornish Farmer:

**Not yet!**