

## Homily 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year A 2023

Redemption, salvation, atonement loudly proclaim the words forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation and lie at the heart of why Jesus came to live among us. But, as St Paul said to us, over all these and on a higher scale was LOVE. God's love brought us into existence, keeps us in being and eventually saved us from ourselves. No wonder then that Jesus keeps coming back to forgiveness and mercy and why it exists in abundance in God. The parable of the King and the unforgiving servant speaks eloquently of this. The 10 thousand talents was a sum impossible to pay back even after being thrown into jail and everything possessed sold.

The conclusion of the parable is that the unforgiving servant had not accepted forgiveness because, if he had, he would never have treated his fellow servant to such an ordeal over what was by comparison a paltry sum. God cannot forgive anyone who refuses forgiveness which is freely and lovingly given but not freely and lovingly accepted.

Whenever we reflect on forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation we become aware that we are continually needing and asking for God's forgiveness and God never fails to respond in a heartbeat. How can we think that there is ever a time when we can rightfully not forgive anyone who has offended us in any way, knowingly or unknowingly, however difficult this may be for us??

Among those we need to forgive do we ever stop to think about ourselves? God forgives us! Do we forgive ourselves? Do we ever accept ourselves as we are? God certainly does!

Maybe, just maybe, if we were more forgiving of ourselves, we would be less easily offended by what others say to us or say about us or do to us. Does God forgive us because we have offended him or does God really forgive us because he sees the harm our offenses do to ourselves? All the experts agree that when we do not forgive others, we do far more damage to ourselves than we do to the offending party. The wisdom of God wants inner peace for each of us, because that is what love wants. Loving God and loving our neighbour is not a command in the ordinary sense of the word because we are made in the image of God and loving God and our neighbour is part of our DNA as followers of Christ. Not to do so goes against our nature, goes against ourselves!!

Insults, backbiting, gossiping about us, spreading false rumours, acting out of envy, even dislike says so much about the person who does this and little about the person wronged. Whenever this happens always remember the words of Jesus about splinters and planks. Thinking in this way, will always make it less easy for you take offence. Jesus has shown us the way. Let's follow him!

Creation offers helpful insight into the importance of forgiveness and healing. **Pope Francis:** by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus brought healing and consolation to many people and proclaimed "a revolution of love". Lac Ste. Anne, in Canada, is also a place of healing, consolation and love, a place that "reminds us that fraternity is genuine if it unites those who are far apart, [and] that the message of unity that heaven sends down to earth does not fear differences, but invites us to fellowship, a communion of differences, in order to start afresh together, because we are all pilgrims on a journey".

As followers of Christ on our shared synodal journey, let us live, work and pray that our common home will teem with life once again. May the Holy Spirit once more hover over the waters and guide our efforts to “renew the face of the earth” (cf. Ps 104:30).