

September 12, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus tells Peter that forgiveness needs to be abundant. At the heart of Christianity is the mercy and forgiveness that our human nature has received from God. As abundant as that is, we in turn are expected to show similar actions toward those that offend us. In a world that is divided in so many ways, you and I are being called to overcome division with mercy, hatred with compassion, and vice with love. When we hear of riots and civil unrest, how are we being called to forgive? When we see acts against the dignity of life, how are we being called to forgive? When we notice ideologies that promote hatred, how do we forgive?

This past Friday we commemorated the 19th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, an evil that caused so many innocent people to lose their lives or suffer life-long trauma. Forgiveness is not at all easy to express when faced with such tragedy. But Jesus answers, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” (Mt 18:22) We have Jesus as our model. Recall that from the cross he forgave his persecutors, and as people of faith we rely on the strength of Jesus to forgive. Evil exists in the world, and we are affected both directly and indirectly. Our reactions to such horrific evils need to promote the culture of life, not more death. Let us not give into anger and frustration but rather be guided by humility and compassion. Jesus says, “They do not know what they are doing.” (Lk 23:34)

Forgiveness is a virtue that we all need to continuously work on. Some of us do this much better than others. I am a firm believer in not holding onto grudges because they only lead to self-destruction. They erode happiness and health. Forgiveness is a lifeline for moving beyond hurt and disappointment. If Jesus can do it from the cross, we can do it in the here and now. Why wait?

There is a lot of “blame” rhetoric in our culture. It seems that, no matter the topic, someone is blaming someone else. This solves nothing. But forgiveness and mercy can solve every problem. Did Jesus blame us for his Passion? No, Jesus, enduring his Passion and from the cross, forgave us all. He preached the forgiveness of sins and led by examples so that we would learn to extend the same mercy to each other. Jesus sent us his Spirit to help and guide our actions towards one another and to help us model what we are to preach: forgiveness.

Beginning this weekend, I am making available the missalettes for people to take home. Since we are not using them in the church currently and the end of the liturgical year is coming quickly, I don’t want to just throw them away. You may pick them up after Mass or on the side porch of the Saint Clement Rectory. Otherwise, you may call the office and we will arrange for you to get one (or 12!). They will be available through the end of September. Please do not take the dark blue covers. If you know of someone that can use a missalette to assist their remote Mass experience, please don’t hesitate to take one to them. Many people are watching Mass online or on T.V., and the missalettes could help them participate more fully.

As always, I am grateful for the many people that support the parish’s mission in spreading the Gospel. Sharing the missalettes and acts of forgiveness continue this mission. This mission is entrusted to each of us as we journey through life. Let not a moment go by where we hold on to blame or grudges. Instead, lead by example to help us build and promote a culture of love and mercy.

Christ Peace!

Fr. Workman