

Pre-Prayering

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...” In our private prayers and asking for God’s grace, we do not find it necessary to pray for a personal sense of justice. We are more than adequately equipped to gauge how much injury we have sustained and the proper amount of recompense due us and by whom. We have a built-in system to weigh insults (minor, slight, can-live-with-it, major and war-alert).

Forgiveness is difficult to pray for, because we become less aware of how we have been forgiven and the seriousness of our having insulted, injured or rejected others. We tend to minimize the “as we have trespassed”, and maximize, “those who have trespassed”. We might pray for the grace to become merciful in our judgments and compassionate in our reception of hurts and unfair treatment. We could also pray for the grace to the harshness and grudges which are a true response at the time of impact, but which, when held onto overtime, tend to continue injuring us who hold them too close.

Reflection

We hear a series of rather strict injunctions in today’s First Reading from the Book of Sirach, which is also known as Ecclesiasticus. There seems to be a bit of quid-pro-quo; when we forgive, then when we pray for mercy, we will receive it. The final verses catch our attention quickly. We are encouraged to remember how we will feel as we near death. We should remember God’s commandments and God’s covenant of love. The message is that God has been personally caring for each human being with forgiveness, guidance and intense love and these reminders will help us in turn to be equally caring, forgiving and loving.

Jesus uses Peter’s question about exactly how many times he, and we, are to forgive our brothers and sisters. Of course, Jesus does not give a straight answer with which Peter, and we, could argue. He describes a story from which Peter, and we can draw our own answer.

An owner desiring to settle all claims and debts has compassion on a servant who had a large debt and was unable to make any repayment. Upon his total acquittal, the same servant seized his fellow servant who owed him a lesser amount and when that servant begged for patience, he was refused and thrown into prison.

We get the picture pretty quickly, but Jesus, desiring to emphasize his point, continues. Other servants report this mat-

ter to the owner who confronts the first servant with the reminder of how the servant had been forgiven his debts which were large, but he could not forgive his fellow servant a lesser debt. The result was that the owner had the servant handed over to be tortured until the whole debt is paid. Jesus then turns to Peter, and us, and says that this is how things will play out for us when we will be forgiven to the extent we have forgiven others from our hearts. Ouch!

Seventy times seven is a biblical exaggeration, though my mother on occasion would say patiently (to one of my brothers or sisters of course), “that’s four hundred and eighty-nine.” Jesus was making a reference to the foreverness of God’s forgiveness of us which we are to reflect in our dealings with those who have trespassed against us.

We have the faculty of memory which can be long and exact, especially about our having been injured in some way. Forgiving is not the same as asking our memory to delete past hurts. Because we remember so well, we assume we have not forgiven. We can easily call up the video and sound bites of those incidents which call for forgiving. We can likewise go through the whole painful experience again in our emotions, but that does not mean we have not forgiven. This is hard for us.

Perhaps forgiving is not an emotional release from the awareness of the injury or the injustice, but revealed when we live with the limps, bumps and dents with less anger dominating our spirits and actions. Memory can seem to hurt us, but it also is part of our spiritual freedom from resentment.

We can pray with the memory that we have been forgiven by God and hopefully by others. We may have to be more exact about how we have trespassed against others and how we have received compassionate mercy from them. This may help us reduce the immensity, in our hearts’ eyes, of the injuries done to us.

There may be injuries we just can not forgive right now and so we pray for patience with ourselves. Our severity of judgment most often injures ourselves and not those who originally hurt us. We are to remember that though our memories are long, life is short. We are to pray with the reality of God’s commandments, God’s covenantal love and according to the Gospel, if we take our resentments to the grave, then God will not take them away after death. Does that make God severe? It seems that with our own grudges in one hand and our severe sense of justice in the other, there would not be any room for God to offer peace and eternal welcome.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Sirach 27:30-28:7 Romans 14:7-9 Matthew 18:21-35

September 17, 2017

靈 修 生 活

身 心 的 釋 放

「修士，針唔“吉”到肉就唔知痛，佢傷得我咁重，要我寬恕佢，真是談何容易，我又不是聖人……」一位青年在談論他在學校的遭遇時曾這樣說。

面對得罪過自己或傷害過自己的人，寬恕有時真的來得不易。我們以遺忘、忽略、指責、否定、躲避去面對傷害或得罪我們的人。耶穌的教導真的這樣難做到？我們覺得難，可能是因為我們停留在滿全規條的層次上。其實耶穌的這份邀請，是要讓我們獲得釋放，讓我們身、心都獲得釋放。

今日我們很注重健康，不能原諒別人或不能原諒自己，往往會影響自己的健康。當我們埋怨或責怪別人或自己時，其結果是自己生氣，且鬱結在心，若沒有宣洩的渠道，便難以解脫。這鬱結不但影響人的情緒，還會影響人的健康。「美國心理精神醫學會」學術研討會的報告就指出，不願意寬恕他人的時候，心跳和血壓都會明顯地增高許多。長期如此，身體難免出現健康問題。

更重要的是寬恕能使我們獲得心靈的健康。破損的關係使我們受苦，令我們鬱鬱寡歡；寬恕讓我們從指責和自責的深淵中爬出來，重修這些原本和諧的關係：重修人與人、人與自我、人與天父的關係。要能寬恕，讀經和福音給予我們一些很重要的提醒

- (一) 我們要時時牢記德訓篇的四個「記著」：「記著最後的結局，而停止仇恨；記著人必會死亡和腐朽，而遵照誡命生活；記著天主的誡命，不要向人發怒；記著至高者的盟約，寬恕別人的過失。」
(德 廿八 6-9) 我們要記著誰是天地的主宰，只有祂能判斷世界，況且人總有一死，當一切都完結，所有的恩恩怨怨還有甚麼意義呢？
- (二) 天主並不是只說而不做，我們亦可從祂身上取經。我們應用天父的眼光去看事物，一個無限包容的天主，祂好像太陽和雨露，不分彼此地，光照和潤澤所有人。祂在十字架上時，戴著茨冠，望著在十字架下、咒罵祂、譏笑祂的人，但祂只寬恕地說：「父！寬恕他們，因為他們不知道他們在作甚麼。」
- (三) 謹記我們都曾得罪別人和天主，但天主好像今日比喻裡的主人，當我們轉向祂時，祂便動憐憫心，寬恕我們、並主動地治療我們的創傷；祂更願意透過修和聖事讓我們具體地獲得寬恕，好使我們能回歸祂的懷抱。我們又有沒有嘗試效法祂的行為去寬恕、接納我們的兄弟姐妹呢？要謹記耶穌的教訓：「如果你們不從心裡寬恕你們的兄弟，我的天父也要這樣對待你們。」

最後，我們當然要放下自己的執著祈禱說：「天父！我們時常得罪祢、得罪他人，但我們深知在我們求之前祢已寬恕了我們。求祢賜給我們一夥豁達、謙遜的心，使我們也能效法耶穌基督，真心地寬恕曾經令我們不好受的兄弟姐妹！」

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 七 年 九 月 十 七 日

德 27:30-28:7 羅 14:7-9 瑪 18:21-35

