

Transformative Power of Forgiveness: A Journey of Faith.

Forgiveness is not a sign of weakness. It is rather a testament to our strength as Christians. It is the key to unlocking a life free from the burden of past grievances.

The Liturgical readings this weekend have many other themes; however, the most outstanding theme is forgiveness.

Amongst all the teachings of Jesus Christ, forgiving and loving our enemies are the most difficult to practice.

In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus says, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." This is the radical love that Jesus demands from His followers like us in this Parish

But why should we forgive? What do we gain from loving our enemies? These are questions that we may ask ourselves when faced with the challenge of forgiving those who have wronged us. The answer lies in the fact that forgiveness is not just about the other person, but about ourselves. When we forgive, we free ourselves from the burden of anger and resentment. We create space for healing and growth. As the saying goes, "To err is human, but to forgive is divine." Forgiveness is a divine act that allows us to participate in God's own nature. It is an act of mercy and compassion that reflects God's own love for us.

We know that forgiveness is not something natural to humans or something we learn spontaneously, it is a decision. Then the question arises how can we acquire the skill of self control to guide against lashing out those who hurt our feelings? St Philip Neri suggests that we practise control of our emotions through our conscious practise of transformative actions especially in the midst of pain and suffering. Hence, we ought to see ourselves following the example of our Lord, Jesus Christ who bore the pain and pang of death with great patience and resilience. Now, with this at heart, we can see our sacrifices as purifying love that over time it becomes second nature with us. This may sound unreal but come to think of it when we set our minds in changing the course of life through heroic means miracles happen. Here the focus is on Jesus not on what we suffer or complain about, why it is us that is suffering. Thus such pious habit could be nurtured through Eucharistic adoration, meditation or reflective reading of the word of God and spiritual readings especially the life of the saints and saying ejaculatory prayers like "Jesus be with me" "Jesus I love you" or repeating short sentences or phrases in the bible like "I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me".

St Augustine noted that there are diverse arms through which we receive pardon for our sins but the greatest of them all is forgiving from our heart the sin committed against us.

Jesus practiced what he preached, even in the most difficult circumstances. As he hung on the cross, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

David also practiced this noble law of non-retaliation. In our first reading (1 Samuel 26: 2, 7-9,12-13,22-25) , we see how David spared the life of King Saul, who was trying to kill him.

The golden rule, as Jesus taught us, is to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

This teaching is not unique to Christianity. Many other religions and philosophers have also taught the importance of loving one's enemies. For example, Buddhism teaches, "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Confucius said, "Do unto others what you would have them do unto you." Hinduism teaches, "Do not unto others which would cause you pain if done to you." Islam teaches, "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desired for himself."

As St. John Chrysostom said, "Nothing makes us like unto God so much as being always ready to forgive." When we forgive our enemies, we tame them, subdue them, and make them our friends. As the saying goes, "The best revenge is none. Heal, move on, and don't become like those who hurt you." May we be guided by the words of Jesus and inspired by the examples of David and other saints.

This weekend we receive in great joy our candidates for confirmation. As a parish we support their faith formation by our good exemplary lives; gracious words of encouragement and especially our prayers that they and we may learn to practice forgiveness as taught by Jesus.

As we embrace this divine mandate, I pray, may we embark on a transformative journey into the heart of God, where forgiveness becomes a beacon of light and faith, guiding us back to His everlasting enfold. Amen.

Blessings.