

September 13, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

As you listened to or read the readings of yesterday, you might have been puzzled. The first reading and the gospel are both about forgiveness, clearly reminding us that if we expect God to forgive us, we must also forgive each other. The crunch comes in the gospel parable. We hear it regularly, so it might ring a bell. A servant owes a HUGE amount to his master, the king and can't repay it, so the king threatens to sell him and his whole family into slavery in repayment of the debt. But the servant pleads with him and he relents and actually forgives the debt. The servant finds one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount and throttles him, demanding that he repay his debt. The forgiven servant has the man thrown in prison until he pays back what he owes. His fellow servants are appalled by this action and tell the master who is angered by the whole affair. He calls the forgiven one in, asks why he didn't extend to his fellow servant the same forgiveness he had received, and hands him over to be tortured. Then the gospel writer adds, "So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

So, the questions arise: Why did the king loan so much money to someone whom he must have known would have great trouble repaying it? Was the newly released debtor more desperate for the repayment (since he was also a servant) and therefore, couldn't show the same largesse to the one who owed him much less? The parable sounds as though God will torture those who don't forgive, though this image goes against the Father whom Jesus describes to his followers.

In the Our Father, we do pray as Jesus taught us, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Jaime Waters, a professor of Catholic Studies at DePaul University, Chicago suggests "the parable teaches the importance of mercy, asking for help and granting relief to those in need. Those with means, like the king, should be fair, just and generous because of their abundance; and it challenges those with lesser means to show kindness to those in even worse circumstances."

If we find ourselves in a situation in which we need to make a wise decision and don't know where to begin, we might follow the advice of Fr. Mychal Judge, the Franciscan New York Fire Dept. Chaplain who was the first to die during the 9/11 tragedy. "When I don't know what's next, I get down on my knees and pray, Lord, take me, mold me, fashion me, show me what you want. Then I watch and listen, and it will come."

Peace be with you and yours and all who are suffering from COVID, hunger, the life-threatening weather and the wildfires.

May our loving God be with us all and help us to be with each other in our prayer and assistance.

Blessings on us all! *Sheral*