



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Loving Father,
You gave Your Son as a sacrifice for our sins. How can we be unforgiving when we consider what He has done for us? Help us to gaze upon the cross whenever we fail to be loving and forgiving. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Sirach 27:30-28:7

“Wrath and anger are hateful things.” These are the first words from our reading of Sirach this weekend.

It is very human to be angry and to even have wrathful flare-ups. But to abide in wrath and anger is another thing.

In his book, “Anger Kills,” Dr. Redford Williams reminds us that a continued dose of anger is harmful to the body. It is like a “slow-acting poison.” It is one thing to be angry when something severe happens to you. It is another to be angry when someone is driving slowly in front of you.

If we know that anger is poison for ourselves, how can we think that it would nourish another? Sirach asks, “Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the LORD?”

The alternative to anger and wrath is love and forgiveness.

We can spend a lifetime trying to deflect those who have wronged us through our anger and lack of forgiveness. But, we will never grow. We will never reach the Christian ideal.

Even when the most ideological people are hell-bent on destroying us or our nation, we can pray for them. Their anger doesn't have to be my anger. Their wrath does not have to be my wrath.

Question

How do you manage your anger?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Romans 14:7-9

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul writes, “None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself.”

In this world where we live behind our cell phones and computers, we are becoming more and more isolated from God and others. People aren't just walking away from religion. They are walking away from humanity.

Thomas Merton wrote:

“When a man attempts to live by and for himself alone, he becomes a little ‘island’ of hate, greed, suspicion, fear... This whole outlook on life is falsified. All his judgments are affected by that untruth. In order to

recover the true perspective, which is that of love and compassion, he must once again learn, in simplicity, truth, and peace, that ‘No man is an island.’”

The Lord Himself chose not to live a solitary life in the heavens. Rather, he became one with us and even died for us so that we could live with Him. We were never created to live alone. In the beginning, God said, “It is not good for man to be alone.”

To live in communion and in love with each other and with the Lord is the Christian ideal. Living in isolation puts us in a perilous place.

Question

Do you know someone who lives in isolation?
What can you do to let them live in communion with God and with others?

This is the second of a three week series,
Loving and Forgiving
Information: dphx.org/Christ-in-our-neighborhood

Commentary

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

Last week, we read Jesus' words in Matthew to treat those who have wronged us like Gentiles and tax collectors. In our commentary, we were reminded that Jesus treated tax collectors and Gentiles very well. In other words, we can't ever give up on our mission to be forgiving and loving.

This week, Peter asks Jesus if he is expected to forgive seven times. Seven, in the Jewish culture, is a perfect number. In other words, Peter asks, "Am I to forgive infinitely?" Jesus responds with, "seventy-seven" times - or "beyond infinity."

In our less than infinite world, we are accustomed to a beginning, a middle, and an end. We think, "There has to be an end to this long saga or drama." In God's world, the saga continues, for He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

If we choose to live in the Kingdom of God, we can stop forgiving when God tells us to stop forgiving. Unfortunately for us, Christ does not give us a date or time when our forgiving can cease. Forgiveness must be as endless as He is endless.

Question

Have I given up forgiving a certain person in my life?
Am I able to offer a prayer of forgiveness for those who threaten to do harm to me, my community, or country?

This Week's Task

Last week, you were invited to reflect on the prologue of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 25. The purpose was to see that the Catechism and the teachings of the Church are not meant to be a hammer to beat people into submission. "In all things charity" reads the prologue.

Often, we become angry - even wrathful - when dealing with those who do not understand our teaching or choose to conform with our doctrine. If we begin our conversations on church matters with charity, love, and forgiveness, we may win a friend. However, we must end our conversations with the same love and forgiveness. Give it a try!

Group Prayer

The group says together the following from the prologue of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Article 25:

The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.

Continue with Psalm 103

Psalm

The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

He pardons all your iniquities,
heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
crowns you with kindness and compassion.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

He will not always chide,
nor does he keep his wrath forever.
Not according to our sins does he deal with us,
nor does he requite us according to our crimes.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he put our transgressions from us.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

Conclude with an Our Father