

Lectionary-based Faith Sharing 24TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Year A - September 13, 2020



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *The Lord is compassionate and merciful.*

All: The Lord does not condemn us forever, He does not treat us as our guilt deserves.

Leader: *The Lord is good to all and compassionate to all his creatures.*

All: The Lord forgives our sins and fills us with love and tenderness.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Though Christ, our Lord. Amen.

First Reading [Sirach 27 (33) – 28 (9)]

Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail.

Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.

Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?

If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins?

Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin!

Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

Commentary

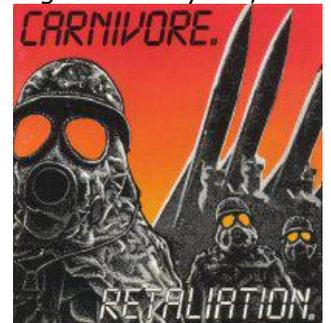
The book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as "Sirach", written by Jesus, the son of Sirach, may have been composed some 150 years before Christ, and contains many tips for leading an orderly life, pleasing in the eyes of God. Although it is primarily aimed at young people, its wisdom is applicable to people of any age.

Among the many topics that it deals with is that of forgiveness. It gives us a realistic and very religious vision of the consequences of hatred and rancor, which turn against the one who feeds these feelings. Therefore, he recommends learning to drown out these feelings and replace them with the sincere practice of forgiveness.

Before Jesus Christ proclaimed it, the author, inspired by God himself, announces that to deserve divine forgiveness, it is necessary to practice human forgiveness. Although it is not directly referring to the resurrection, the allusion to death within the text suggests that all human things are temporary, subject to a transitory end that comes with our death.

Reflection

- (1) What is wrath? What is anger? Is any of them worse?
- (2) Discuss the saying "I forgive, but I don't forget"
- (3) It could be that someone has hurt us, we have forgiven them and we do not hold a grudge against them. Does it mean that we are required to seek that person's company?
- (4) Discuss death penalty.
- (5) Who suffers the most: the person who has a grudge or the person who caused a grudge?
- (6) Read Leviticus 19 (17-18). Compare with readings from last week and this week.



Second Reading [Romans 14 (7-9)]

Brothers and sisters:

None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself.

For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

Commentary

This is the last time (for this year) that a part of Saint Paul's letter to the Romans will be proclaimed. In this brief paragraph, which incidentally begins another topic in the letter and will run until 15:13, Paul reflects on issues of fraternal coexistence within the Christian community.

Community life is more harmonious if we learn to stifle selfishness. What really counts is communion with God, knowing that we belong to him and that everything we do should be related to him. There are many sources of distraction in life that can separate us from this vision, in this way of relating to God.

With his passage from death to life, Christ has become the Lord of the living and the dead. Paul told us already in chapter 6 (verses 16 to 22) that the Christian is no longer under the power of evil, but at the service of God. In other words, we should not be looking at small things that are not worth wasting time with. And if we all serve the same Lord, no one can behave as superior to others, much less, judging each other.

Reflection

(1) Discuss the first two sentences of this reading. How do you understand them?

(2) The path of our faith could be summed up in three stages: One, of the discovery of the faith. Then a second, to be aware of the presence of God. And then a third stage, of feeling that we belong to God, and for him and for him we live. Argue.

Gospel [Matthew 18 (21-35)]

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.

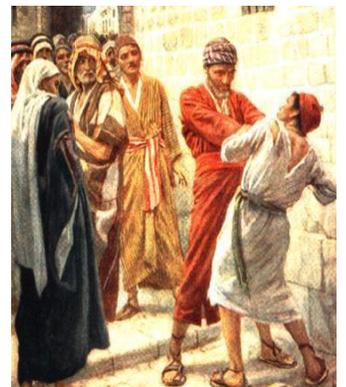
When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair.

His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?'

Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."



Commentary

Last week we heard the beginning of this discourse of Jesus Christ, which began with the theme of fraternal correction and common prayer. Now we find the second part, the teaching about forgiveness. The first part plays with the biblical symbolism of seven, a number related to perfection (eg, the days of the week, the colors of the rainbow, the musical notes, etc. .) Seventy times seven is an expression like any other of our times to indicate a staggeringly high amount. This exaggeration is, like all parables, an invitation to learn in a way that we do not forget a teaching. This time, about forgiveness, which, according to Jesus, must be absolute, not "with measure" or "by partial deliveries."

It is not a question now of calculating how far to forgive, but of radically changing the mind and trying to imitate the merciful attitude of the Lord. (Which, by the way, is proclaimed with the psalm of the day)

The parable, which portrays much what Jesus himself taught us in the Lord's Prayer, seeks to show us that God is willing to forgive without limits, but that just as God forgives in what is truly important, we must forgive in what at the time of the truth is less important.

Reflection

- (1) Which expression caught your attention the most?
- (2) What is the most difficult thing to forgive?
- (3) Have you seen yourself in the case of not having been forgiven by someone?
- (4) Is there a difference between "forgive" and "let go"?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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