

## 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

- **This** conversation between Jesus and Peter ...
  - is **really** a commentary on the **5<sup>th</sup>** Beatitude...
  - which Jesus talked about...**way** back in the **5<sup>th</sup>** Chapter of Matthew:
    - *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*
- **Mercy** is something...that goes **against** our **fallen** nature.
  - We **tend** to automatically...
    - play **favorites**...hold **grudges**...**demand** our rights...
    - and care **so much more** about our own **hopes**...**plans**...and **problems**...
    - **than** we do about anyone **else’s**.
  - And when we **do** take an interest in **others** ...
    - it’s **usually** because we **like** them...
    - **not** because we view them...
    - as being **so** valued by God...
    - that He **sent** His Son to **suffer** and **die** for them.
  - When we **operate** on this level...
    - we **always** run into a limit...
    - in our **own** ability to forgive.
  - But Jesus is **telling** us today...
    - that we **are** called to be **limitless**...in our **forgiveness**:
      - to be **merciful**...as our **Heavenly** Father is merciful.
- We’re **certainly** glad...
  - when God is **gentle** and **patient** with us...
    - **always** willing to **forgive**.
  - But we’re **so** reluctant...to **be** like that with others...
    - **just** like the man in our parable.
  - And **yet**...if we **don’t** allow God...to **help** us **overcome** that tendency...
    - our hearts will become **so** closed...
    - that **even** the mercy of Jesus Christ...
    - **won’t** be able to get in for ourselves.
  - But if we **do** ...
    - then our **hearts** will allow...
      - the **full** flood of God’s love...to **inundate** them...
    - **making** our hearts...
      - an **oasis** for those who suffer...
      - and a **magnet** for the kindness of others.
  - Blessed **indeed** are the merciful...
    - for **showing** mercy...is the **way** to attract it.

- During the **genocide**...
  - that took place in **Rwanda** in 1994...
  - in just a **few** short months...nearly a **million** people were **brutely** killed.
  - **Among** the survivors...
    - was a **young** woman by the name of **Immaculee**.
  - When the **rioting** began...
    - she and **seven** other women took **refuge**...
    - in the **tiny** bathroom...of a **Protestant** pastor.
    - And they **didn't** leave that room for the next **91** days.
  - At **one** point...
    - **Immaculee** could hear the slaughter...
      - **right** outside the window.
    - She **even** heard the wailing of a baby.
      - They **all** listened for **hours**...
      - as the baby's **crying** become **fainter** and fainter...
- During those **91** days of terror...Immaculee survived...**because** she prayed.
  - She prayed **all** the time...**especially** the Rosary.
  - And at **one** point...
    - she was **praying** about the **men** who were doing this...
      - and she was **so** full of anger...
      - that she felt **hatred**...
      - **welling** up in her heart.
    - She **actually** wanted to forgive them...
      - but she **just** couldn't find the strength...
      - so she **brought** that to the Lord in prayer.
      - And as a **result**...a **great** grace was given to her.
    - He **allowed** her to see...
      - that the **young** men **engaged** in this genocide...
      - were **His** children too...**just** as much as she was.
    - And in that **moment**...her **anger** dissipated.
      - She **actually** began to feel compassion for them...
      - because she **finally** understood...
      - that they were **blinded** by their sin.
- **Later** on...when the **genocide** was over...
  - and she was **trying** to return to a normal life...
    - she came **face** to face with the **man** who killed her family.
    - She **immediately** said...
    - with the full **freedom** of her heart:
    - *"I forgive you."*
- We should **all** strive to be **merciful** like that.
  - There is **no** limit to God's love...
    - because He sees **all** of us...**as** His beloved children.
  - So there should be **no** limits to our love for our **brothers** and **sisters**.

- We can **all** forgive...the **little** offenses...that happen to us **all** the time.
  - But it's **so** much harder to forgive the **big** things.
  - And **sooner** or later...
    - we **will** have to forgive a **major** offense...
    - maybe even a **life-shattering** wound...
    - **inflicted** by someone we love.
  - **Or**...we may have done something **ourselves**...
    - **so** grave...
    - that we **just** can't seem to forgive ourselves.
  - In **these** cases...
    - it's so much **harder** to follow...**Christ's** command...of **limitless** mercy...
    - but it's **not** impossible.
  
- We've got to remember that forgiveness is **not** just a feeling...it's an **act** of the will.
  - It's a **decision** to let go of that desire for revenge...
    - and to **release** the offender...
    - into the **merciful** hands of our Savior.
  - And **that** decision...
    - **that's** something that takes place...
      - at such a **deep** level of the soul...
      - that it **often** takes place...**side** by side...
      - with the **ongoing** emotions of **anger** or **resentment**.
  - Those **feelings** are simply **natural** reactions...
    - to the **experience** of injustice...
    - feelings that are often **beyond** our control.
  - But our **decisions**...our **choices**...
    - **those** exist at the very core of our being...in the **will**...
    - and **those** things...we **can** control.
  - In **other** words...
    - it **is** possible to **truly** forgive someone...
    - and at the **same** time...feel **really**, really angry at them.
  - We do have to **counteract** those strong feelings by prayer...
    - and by **turning** our attention to **other** things going on in our life.
  - And **this** is something that the **Lord** tells us...
    - we **will** have to choose...
    - **over** and over again.
  - But **eventually**...
    - God's grace **will** overflow from all these choices...
    - and **bring** healing... **even** to these powerful emotions.
  
- And so as we **continue** with this Mass...
  - let's **renew** our faith in God's **limitless** mercy...
  - and **beg** Him...with **all** our hearts...
  - for the **grace** we need...
  - to **treat** others...**just** as mercifully...as He **treats** us.