

Homily for July 7, 2021

The link between the readings for today might be the psalm response, “God let your mercy be on us.” We see Joseph, the dreamer, meeting with his brothers, who sometime before sold him for 20 pieces of silver, informing their father of his demise. In the Gospel, Jesus called the Twelve to mission them. In Eugene Peterson’s translation of this passage of Matthew, it states “He gave them the power to kick out the evil spirits and to tenderly care for the bruised and hurt lives.” The image of the Holy One shining through the readings is one of forgiveness and love.

In our first reading, Joseph recognized his brothers, but concealing his identity, treated them sternly. He kept them in the guardhouse for 3 days. Upon releasing them, Joseph arranged a deal that would prove their integrity. Because he spoke through an interpreter, they didn’t realize he understood what they said. The passage concludes, “but turning away from them he wept.” In his heart, Joseph had forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a process which doesn’t happen automatically. The journey can be long and arduous or could be quick, perhaps even simultaneous. However it happens, we need to pass through four steps: to forgo, to forbear, to forget and to forgive. We are not given any insight into how Joseph traveled through this process. We only know he did.

But for us, it may be simple or difficult. Are we able to forego - letting go of vengeance, complaining to others, bitter words, anger, retaliation, Can we forbear—willingly accepting our share of the burden of forgiveness, bearing the wrong patiently, refusing to connect the present situation to any past grievances, with simple human courtesy?

How do we forget --by creating new memories so our next encounter with the transgressor *allows us to relate in a new frame of reference thus creating openings for the future?* *Will we forgive---* giving to others as God has given to us, each act of forgiveness leads us deeper into the gift of forgiveness. God has given to us in Jesus.

In their journeys, the disciples will receive many bruised and hurt persons. In his every encounter, Jesus listened with deep respect, tenderness and love. He is the face of God.

In both of our readings, we are aware of the tender mercy of God. As we wander through our ordinary days, how do we receive those whose lives intersect with ours? Do we receive those we find disruptive, negative or challenging with deep respect? Are we able to see beyond appearances, to the pain and hurt some carry in their hearts? Can we offer them the tender mercy of God?

Reference: Matthew by Megan McKenna

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