

To forgive is to be like God!

TRINITY 15 – A – SPRINGLINE PARISH
[Genesis 50. 15-21, Romans 14. 1-12, Matthew 18. 21-28]

I am increasingly discovering that the Bible has an inner resource, and inner power, that could be drawn upon to nourish and fortify us throughout the day. In the three lectionary readings that we have today, the Old Testament reading and the gospel reading are connected thematically.

Pause to reflect

*The first reading from the Book of Genesis chapter 50. 15-21 and the gospel reading of today from Matthew chapter 18, verses 21 to 25 have the same theme which is God's unlimited forgiveness towards us. That is why I have titled the theme of our reflection today as *to forgive is to be like God*.*

These days, especially today, we recall the horrible events that took place at Parsons Green London underground, the terrible plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, we hear of atrocities done by the evil people, hatred and lack of forgiveness in families, societies and nations. *Each of us know how difficult it is to forgive someone who does evil against us.*

Christianity seems like a failure especially in our western world not because it is bad or wrong but because it has not been fully lived by Christians. Gandhi used to say that the problem of Christianity is not with Christ but with Christians. *The Word of God today once again calls us back to remind us Christians who we are as followers of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Word of God challenges to be true Christians.*

Pause to reflect

The first reading from the Book of Genesis is the climax to the story of Joseph in Egypt. We all know the story of Joseph and how he was abandoned by his brothers in a well and how he was sold as a slave to Egyptian traders and how eventually he was favoured by Pharaoh and he rose to become the Prime Minister of the whole of Egypt.

What we read in today's account is the first explicit request for forgiveness that is recorded as the brothers slyly invoke the father's command. We read in verses 16 and 17: *"So they approached Joseph saying, 'your father gave the instruction before he died, (170 say to Joseph, forgive the crimes of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you. Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father.'"*

We are told how Joseph forgave his brothers the wrong they did to him. See verses 17c and 18.

Joseph can see how God has brought good out of evil, he goes beyond forgiveness to a practical concern for their well-being. Joseph pre-figures Christ who taught unlimited forgiveness.

Pause to reflect

The gospel from Mt 18. 21-35 teaches about life in the Kingdom. The Word of God asks us – how much do we forgive? How much does God forgive?

Verse 27: “And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

The parable that Jesus has given us teaches us who and what God is like: his whole nature is forgiveness and mercy. And just because he forgives us so much, he loves us so much, we are to do likewise, we are to forgive and we are to love like him!

Unlimited forgiveness is the character of God and of a true Christian who is called to forgive like Jesus did as he prayed on the cross, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!’”

Verse 32 – 35: “Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?’ (34) And in his anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. (35) So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Pause to reflect

The lesson that we can learn from the Word of God is the following.

God is merciful, forgiving, but he is also just. He will deal with us justly according to our deeds. See also the second reading Romans 14.12 “each of us will be accountable to God.”

Forgiveness – unlimited forgiveness. To forgive us to be like God. To forgive is to sow seeds for making a better world.

Pause to pray

[ST Mattapally]