

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

(Missale Romanum, 1962)

“BE GENEROUS IN FORGIVING OTHERS”

In today’s Epistle to the Ephesians (6:10-17), St Paul recognizes that the spiritual life is a battle. He provides military imagery for us to consider:

‘Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil.’ Why? Because ‘our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and Powers, against rulers in this world of darkness, against the evil spirits in regions above.’

‘Stand fast with the truth as the belt that girds you.’

Wear ‘justice as your breastplate’.

Put on ‘zeal for the gospel of peace’ on your feet.

‘Take up faith as your shield; it will enable you to extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one.’

Place on your head the ‘helmet of salvation’. and

Use the ‘sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’

God gives us the armor and weapons we need to go into battle. May we use them wisely and effectively in the pursuit of what is good, right, holy and just.

St Augustine gave an interesting commentary in relation to today's Gospel and to the Lord's Prayer:

'It is quite true that every man has his fellow-man for a debtor; for who is the man that has had no one to offend him? But, at the same time, who is the man that is not debtor to God? For all of us have sinned? Man, therefore, is both debtor to God, and creditor to his fellow-man. It is for this reason that God has laid down this rule for [your] conduct, that you must treat [your] debtor as He [God] treats His.'ⁱ

Psalm 130, verse 3, reminds us of the enormous debt that each sinner has before God:

'If you kept a record of our sins; Lord, who could ever survive?'

Fr Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen has the following for us to consider in relation to today's Gospel:

'God, being infinite goodness, knows and has pity on our misery; each time we place ourselves before Him and humbly acknowledge our faults with sincere repentance, [God] immediately pardons us and cancels all our debts. ... [God's] pardon is so generous, so great and complete, that it not only annuls our debts, but destroys even the memory of them, as if they had never existed.'ⁱⁱ

Such is the forgiveness of God, which was shown by the king in today's Gospel parable. But we must be mindful of the latter part of the parable: 'If we wish God to be generous in pardoning us, we must be generous in forgiving others; we shall be forgiven according to the measure in which we forgive.' That is to say: 'we ourselves give to God the exact measure of the mercy [God] is to show to us.'ⁱⁱⁱ

In considering our own response to God's merciful love, we should make mention of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, a devotion which springs from the Holy Sacrament of the Mass and the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. Today's Gospel should lead us to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy more fervently and more frequently!

St. Faustina wrote about an experience of prayer that came to her about her own participation in the Divine Mercy:

'I want to be completely transformed into Your mercy and to be Your living reflection, O Lord. May the greatest of all divine attributes, that of Your unfathomable mercy, pass through my heart and soul to my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful, so that I may never suspect or judge from appearances, but look for what is beautiful in my neighbors' souls and come to their rescue.

Help me, that my ears may be merciful, so that I may give heed to my neighbors' needs and not be indifferent to their pains and moanings.

Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful, so that I should never speak negatively of my neighbor, but have a word of comfort and forgiveness for all.

Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful and filled with good deeds, so that I may do only good to my neighbors and take upon myself the more difficult and toilsome tasks.

Help me, that my feet may be merciful, so that I may hurry to assist my neighbor, overcoming my fatigue and weariness. My true rest is in the service of my neighbor.

Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful so that I myself may feel all the sufferings of my neighbor. I will refuse my heart to no one. I will be sincere ever with those who, I know, will abuse my kindness. I will lock myself up in the most merciful Heart of Jesus. I will bear my own suffering in silence. May Your mercy, O Lord, rest upon me.^{iv}

ⁱ St Augustine, *Sermon LXXXIII*, as quoted by Abbot Gueranger, 1983, *THE LITURGICAL YEAR*, Vol. XI, Marian House, North Dakota, p. 450

ⁱⁱ Fr. Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, 1964, *DIVINE INTIMACY*, TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., Rockford, IL, p. 1012

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, p. 1013

^{iv} Taken from St. Faustina's Diary (163), as quoted in Fr. Gaitley's (2014) *Consoling the Heart of Jesus*, Marian Press, Stockbridge, MA, p. 294