

Twenty-Fourth Sunday Ordinary time-A-September 13, 2020

Sirach 27:30-28:7; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35
Gathering Hymn, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy." Eucharistic Prayer Reconciliation II;

Homily: Fr. Ed Hislop

FORGIVENESS, HOSPITALITY, MERCY, COMPASSION,
PARDON.

Pope Francis often describes the church as a field hospital, a place for sinners, a home for the rejected and a house for the unwelcomed, needy, and offended. A place, he reminds us, where there is to be found a true sense of hospitality. Yet we know and feel and see the numbers of people who leave the church or who never come because they have not found forgiveness, compassion, welcome or even a sense of healing from whatever may be broken in their living. Too many people, and we all know them, many in our own families, are not gathering with the church because they feel unforgiven, judged, or unwelcomed because they cannot live up to perceived standards or "regulations." They may feel judged or unappreciated because of their life choices; their marital status, their sexual orientation; they may have left the church because of deep hurt, a sense of rejection, exploitation, or abuse. They may have felt the "hateful things of wrath and anger."

Pope Francis notes that "So many people need their wounds healed. This is the mission of the Church," he says, "to heal wounds of the heart, to open doors, to free people, to say that God is good, God forgives all..." God is compassion, mercy and always slow to anger. The Church, the parish, if we are real and true, must be filled with human beings who long to welcome with an understanding and hope absent from judgement. A place, Sirach reminds us, where there is no room for hate of any kind; a house where judgement is left to God, where faults are overlooked, and forgiveness and compassion are a way living and believing.

Forgiveness and hospitality are two sides of the same coin and for the true church, a never-ending way of living, believing, and serving. Forgiving, being reconciled, is for those who truly live the Gospel of Jesus, like breathing—it

is the only way to live, the only way to honestly believe.

Hospitality is essential for forgiveness and faith. As we strive to welcome all, we ourselves are welcomed, our hearts changed, and our own weaknesses overwhelmed with God's never-ending mercy. Hospitality is feeling, believing, and recognizing that God's love is broader than the measures of our mind and the limits of our perceptions.

Hospitality, like forgiveness, is seeing the beauty and the wonder of God in each human face and in the struggles and hopes of each human heart. It is always moving forward. Hospitality is reconciliation, mercy, compassion, and healing. It is welcoming, as we will pray soon, "people of every race, language, and way of life into a new world where the fullness of God's peace will be revealed..." Eucharistic Prayer Reconciliation II

In these days, in this time, this is our work, our task and our hope, the meaning of the Gospel just proclaimed and the sincere embrace of the truth that *"there is a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea, and a kindness in God's justice which is more than liberty."* Gathering Hymn

So, our own spirit of hospitality and reconciliation must also be wide and kind, deliberate and sincere as we work to extend this kind of welcoming invitation to our many neighbors, expressed several years ago by Catholic Faith Formation leader:

"Are you married with kids, worrying for them, and committed to their welfare? Are you divorced? Are you married for the second, or even the third time? Are you gay, lesbian, or transgendered? Are you a single parent struggling to make ends meet, but also hoping to have love in your life again? Well if you are, then you belong to us because you belong to Christ."

Are you lonely? Are you a widow? Are you a single man or woman who would prefer to have a spouse? Are you disabled or disfigured? Have you run out of luck? Does your life seem flat? Is your faith on a slowdown? Well, if you are, then you belong to us because you belong to Christ!

Are you struggling financially? Have you been laid off? Out of work because of downsizing or pandemic? Does it seem like you can never quite get it all together? Well, if so, then you belong to us because you belong to Christ!

Are you struggling with family-planning questions? Is your family in turmoil? Have you been a victim of abuse or violence, of a crime? Are you fearful? Are you a criminal or imprisoned? Do you have a past about which you feel ashamed? Are you homeless or hopeless? Well, if so, then you belong to us because you belong to Christ!

Are you new here? An immigrant maybe? Documented or undocumented? A dreamer? Are you threatened with deportation? Are you from another Christian tradition? Are you full of doubt today, like Thomas? Are you fearful like the disciples were? Has it been a while since you darkened the doorway of a church? None of that

matters. You belong to us because you belong to Christ.

All people of good will are welcome here: that's the really Good News! If you've been away, you can come back; if you've been living in darkness, you can come to the light; if you haven't been able to believe without seeing him, look around you, the Body of Christ is all around you. Sinners are welcome, saints, too. Everyone is welcome to come to Christ, our Lord, and our God, indeed!

WHOEVER YOU ARE, WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE, WHEREVER YOU'VE BEEN, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!"

From Whole Community Catechesis, Bill Huebsch. © 2003 Twenty Third Publications, 185 Willow Street, PO Box 180, Mystic, CT 06355. ALL

The words of Francis echo: "So many people need their wounds healed. This is the mission of the Church: to heal wounds of the heart, not to judge, to open doors, not to close them, to free people, to say that God is good."

Forgiveness, hospitality, mercy, compassion, pardon. God's kindness needs to become ours. Christ's way must be the path.

HOW DIFFERENT WE COULD BE! HOW DIFFERENT OUR NATION AND WORLD WOULD BE. HOW DIFFERENT OUR CHURCH COULD BE.



1475 Eaton Street ~ Missoula, MT 59801