

## Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, the conversation initiated by St. Peter with Jesus is really a commentary on the fifth beatitude in Chapter 5 of St. Matthew's gospel: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy." However, the deeper the hurt, the more difficult mercy and forgiveness become, and in some cases, it almost seems impossible. Mercy and forgiveness are not natural to our fallen human nature!

All of us tend to hold on to hurts and grudges, resentments and anger. The fact that we do, is an indication of our wounded and fallen human nature. We were made in the image and likeness of God; however, when our humanity became distorted by original sin and our personal sins, the image and likeness of God in our ability to love like God loves was also distorted. That is why we find forgiveness and mercy so very difficult. Jesus knows this, and He knows that we can only do this when the human heart is conformed by the mercy of God to mercy.

To overcome this reluctance to forgive and let go, requires the grace of mercy and forgiveness that God really wants to give us; but, we must ask for that grace, and that is the first step! If we do not ask, the wounds left by our hurtfulness grow and grow and begin to distort our lives, and we begin to find that bitterness and cynicism begin to distort our vision of life and our happiness.

I often use this process of forgiveness in my own life. Jesus gave it to me when I was hurt by a friend again and again. One morning as I was praying, it was the only thing I could think about. Jesus said to me: "Vernon, do you like the bitter taste of anger and hurt that you are now experiencing?" I told Him: "No Lord, but I don't know how to get rid of it." He gave me a way, and I have passed it on to numerous people over the years over the last 25 years:

First: pray for the grace of Mercy and Forgiveness. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Immediately exercise it, because when you ask for this Grace, it is a grace that God Himself wants you to have. Tell Jesus: Lord, despite what I feel, I choose to let go and I choose to forgive this person. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Ask Jesus for the grace of healing for your wounded

emotions and memories. He wants to heal you! 4<sup>th</sup>: Then pray for the healing that the person who has harmed you needs, because when you do so, you are more and more conformed to the merciful heart of Jesus. 5<sup>th</sup>: Continue to pray this prayer for as long as it takes to let go and let God. You will know when it is finished, because you will no longer experience bitterness and hurt. I pray some form of this prayer every day before the Blessed Sacrament: “Lord please heal those whom I have hurt and harmed, and forgive those who have harmed and hurt me as well.”

Jesus commands us to be merciful if we want mercy; but, He also knows how wounded we are. He tells us to open wide the doors of our minds and hearts to the Mercy He wants to work in us and through us. Let His love flood you with an ocean of mercy; don't become discouraged as you pray through the hurt. Each time you return to this prayer, He is conforming you more and more to Himself, and pouring out His mercy upon you! That is why He tells us: “Blessed are the merciful; for they shall be shown mercy!”