

24th Sunday

My beloved brothers and sisters, today's gospel is really a commentary on the Beatitude: "Blessed are the Merciful..." Being merciful means learning to see others more and more as God sees them, with God's merciful heart that we see in the Person of Jesus. This kind of mercy, is not natural to us! What is natural is to remember hurts with resentment and hurt and anger. We chew on it, like an old cow chewing on its cud, and we also try to dismiss the need to forgive and let go, by holding on to resentment. That is why Jesus teaches us in the Our Father: "forgive us our sins, as we forgive the sins of those who have sinned against us..." It is not that God will not forgive us; rather, until I make the choice and do the hard work of forgiveness and mercy, I shut out the healing mercy of God in my life!

A most extraordinary young woman watched the genocide of her people: almost 1 million Catholic people were murdered and hacked to death with machetes, by other Catholics. Immaculee and seven other women took refuge in a tiny bathroom inside a Protestant pastor's house for 91 days. Her mother was one of those murdered and hacked to death by the opposing tribe. At first, she was full of anger and hatred for these people who did these terrible things, and it began to poison her heart. In a moment of Grace, the Lord touched her in such a way that it changed everything in her heart, and she began to pray for the Grace of forgiveness. She began to see that the young men who did these things, they were also children of God, just as she was a child of God. In a moment, her anger and hatred dissipated and she began to feel compassion for them because they were so blinded by their sins! When the genocide was over, she came face to face with the man who had so brutally murdered her mother and her brother. Her first words to him were: "I forgive you!" She has become an apostle of mercy now in the Church and the world!

Mercy and forgiveness go against our nature. We ruminate on our hurts, slights, insults, nourishing insults, demanding our rights, on and on and on, never at peace, constantly churning our hurt over and over in our hearts! Jesus wants to set us free and heal our wounded hearts and emotions and open our lives to His

healing mercy and love! But, we cannot do so on a natural level! Forgiveness and mercy are a Divine Grace; therefore, the first step of healing, is to ask for the Grace!

The second step, once we have asked, is to immediately exercise it, for when we ask for a Grace that God wants for us, He gives it to us, but we must utilize it: We must pray: Lord, with your Grace, I choose to forgive this person; (because forgiveness and mercy are a choice, not a feeling, the feelings must be healed!).

The third step is then to ask Jesus: Lord, come and heal my broken and wounded heart and emotions, set me free!

The fourth step is to ask Jesus: Lord, have mercy upon that person who hurt me. Heal them, give peace to them!

The final step is to keep praying this prayer until all of the healing and forgiving is done. You will know when it is done, when it no longer bothers you!

If we don't let God overcome our reluctance to forgive, then our hearts will become so close that God's mercy will not penetrate us, and we become bitter, angry and resentful people. God forbid, I don't want to be an old sourpuss! Jesus, teach me your way, and give me your Grace of Mercy!