

Sermon

◆ **First Reading:** *Ecclesiasticus 27:30-28:7*

◆ **Second Reading:** *Romans 14:7-9*

◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 18:21-35*

RESENTMENT AND ANGER, THESE ARE FOUL THINGS, AND BOTH ARE FOUND WITH THE SINNER These are the opening words from the 1st reading this Sunday ; the same readings conclude with 4 “REMEMBERS” but we’ll come to that in due course ;

And who is not without sin among us, **LET HIM CAST THE 1ST STONE** Anger certainly is part of our human emotional components, so also hunger, loneliness and tiredness. If any one of these 4 is out-of-harmony then STOP!! And see what can be done to relieve whatever it is that’s troubling you.

But what about our RESENTMENTS? We all have them to a greater or lesser degree, the lesson from the readings is **FORGIVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR THE HURT HE DOES YOU, AND WHEN YOU PRAY, YOUR SINS WILL BE FORGIVEN.**

That sounds great!!, the English writer C..S. Lewis once said **EVERYONE SAYS FORGIVENESS IS A LOVELY IDEA, UNTIL THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO FORGIVE....**in other words, easier said than done ;

You and I have our own resentments to deal with, let’s start with your boss from hell!! “if only I could strangle him/her slowly, and as I strangle him I’ll let him know my reason(s)”, that’s only one example of a “resentment situation” ; Examples of how and why we become resentful are multiple ; As a priest, I occasionally see it among families at funerals “father, we’d prefer not to sit with THEM on the other side!”, draw your own conclusion! ; if you had been a Jewish survivor from a Nazi concentration camp, having been beaten and left without food, then surely your resentment would be overpowering, and yet many survivors have expressed forgiveness towards their cruel captors of that time. Usually among families you’ll find resentments, petty jealousies, control freaks and of course favouritisms, these are “great mixtures” in the development of RESENTMENTS! So what on earth are we going to do with our resentments, and FORGIVENESS???? **LORD, HOW OFTEN MUST I FORGIVE MY BROTHER IF HE WRONGS ME? 7 TIMES? NO! SEVENTY SEVEN TIMES !!!** “but” says you “isn’t once enough??” gosh! If only we could manage just that ONCE!! ;

Some people are of a forgiving nature, more power to them!, while others allow the resentment to fester until it turns into HATE!, now we're into deadly territory, because hatred may lead us to carrying out a supreme act of spite or worse, MURDER!! Therefore we must cut the weeds of resentment before they grow and become more difficult to "pull up" ; for those of you who enjoy gardening, you may eventually come across a creeper weed, the more it grows with its firm strong roots, the more difficult it becomes to root out and throw away, in like manner we need to deal with our resentments as efficiently as possible, but HOW!!!!!! That's your task and mine, personally I pray for those who have hurt me in any way, I mention their name(s) and pray for their wellbeing, but have I forgiven them?

No, not yet! therefore I regularly have to start all over again in my feeble efforts to forgive ; also I constantly remind myself that if I leave this world with my resentments still festering, then I don't expect to enter Heaven immediately(...with or without resentments, I still don't expect to enter Heaven immediately..) ; what can we take from the readings this Sunday?? Our resentments have to be dealt with sooner or later ; we can always pray for those who have hurt us in the past or recently, ask the Holy Spirit Healer to guide you thru' the process of forgiveness ; Our Lord, a fellow human being, set the example on the cross when He said **FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING**

And getting back to the "4 remembers" in the 1st reading **REMEMBER THE LAST THINGS AND STOP HATING**, the last 4 things are DEATH, JUDGEMENT, HEAVEN and HELL, where have you CHOSEN to end up for eternity?, it's much easier to get to Hell !!, that's another day's exploration!!

REMEMBER DISSOLUTION and DEATH, as in, all things come to an end, our mortal frame will dissolve into a state of decay, our family ties will dissolve, our remaining plans & ambitions will come to nothing, our place at table will be occupied by someone else, within 60 to 80 years the name on our tombstone will be almost illegible, and as for our friendships, we will remain with that ONE PRECIOUS SACRED ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP, our friendship with the lord-of-Life, the life of the soul lives on

REMEMBER THE COMMANDMENTS, AND DO NOT BEAR YOUR NEIGHBOUR ILL-WILL, there are still 10 commandments, 10 sacred laws so that we may live at peace with God(..whatever we conceive Him to be..) at peace with our neighbour, and of course at peace with ourselves and with our very imperfect world, but who made it IMPERFECT??, there is nothing imperfect about God!

And **REMEMBER THE COVENANT OF THE MOST HIGH, AND OVERLOOK THE OFFENCE** as already mentioned, you and I have to deal with those who have offended us seriously or not so seriously,

are we willing to pray for them? And to intentionally mention their name(s) in our private prayer? .

Concluding thought ; the response to the psalm is **THE LORD IS COMPASSION AND LOVE, SLOW TO ANGER AND RICH IN MERCY**

If that be the case, if the Lord is forever willing to forgive our faults, shortcomings, imperfections and resentments, then are we not bound to make a sincere effort in letting-go those resentments that ultimately drag us down, robbing us of inner peace, and in some cases causing an ill-at-easeness, which translates into a disease, an emotional disease! And who wants that in the middle of a Pandemic?

.....stay healthy.....be well...

Fr Kieran A. Fitzharris SVD