

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost! The gift promised to the Apostles has finally arrived. At the Vigil of Pentecost, the people experienced confusion and chaos at Babel. Now finally the gift of Truth has finally arrived and order will be restored. At the beginning the gospel describes briefly, how they locked themselves in a room for fear of the Jews, locking not only the door but also their hearts; fear imprisoned them, now at the arrival of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of Truth, it would give them the courage and the strength to proclaim the Good News to newly formed communities of faith. From our own personal experience, we know what fear does, to a person. It has happened to all of us and occasionally happens much today but hopefully not as often as before.

As Jesus stood in the midst of the Apostles, he said to them, "Peace be with you", and then he showed them his hands and his side. They were overwhelmed but rejoiced. Then as he was commissioned, he proceeded to commission them; as the Father has sent me, so I send you! Then he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit, whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." This is part of God's Divine Power-Gift shared with them to help us in our vulnerability as humans. In a retrospective glimpse of my heart, I recalled some years in one of my Sunday homily, I was reflecting and preaching on forgiveness, after Mass someone approached me and mentioned, at the exchange of peace, I could not exchange a greeting with the person behind me because he murdered my father, I was stunned, powerless, speechless and helpless. In retrospect since then, I have reflected on that experience and try to develop and examine more carefully how difficult and challenging forgiving is twofold, intellectual and human. With prayer and patience, I have taken this experience and its struggle as challenging and difficult as it is, is a central part of our religions experience both Divine and Human.

At Pentecost we have both the beginning and birthday of the Church. As Ascension Thursday approaches the disciples will begin their formal ministry in the world, to bringing the sacraments to those who enter the door of Faith, as they begin their journey with Baptism ending in death. The gospel today gives us a glimpse of God's plan on how he wants the Apostles to operate as they minister to his people and how we should respond and receive their sacramental ministry. As the door of faith opens we receive the three initiation sacraments.

The gospel today present one of the most challenging sacrament for all of us, Reconciliation, Confession, and Penance! In one of our Collect, (opening prayer), we prayed, Lord you build your sacred law upon love of you and our neighbor. Now, given their most precious gift, truth to lead and guide them. But with that in commissioning them, Jesus presents them with one of their most difficult challenges, as they proclaimed the Good News, forgiveness. It is not only between God and me, as many believe, it is between God, me and my neighbor. Many feel sacramental confession is not necessary, the priest can't do anything for me. Confession is difficult for me and anyone who goes, it is humbling, it makes us realize we need his grace to do this. The Apostles had to seek forgiveness, Thomas and St. Peter did, we hear Thomas saying, "My Lord and My God", St. Peter, Lord I am a sinful man, and we hear Jesus telling him, get behind me Satan.

As I glimpse at this my heart feels the tension, and probably yours also," what you forgive they are forgiven and what you retain, they are retained"! This is the heart of the matter and the core of sacramental confession and the personal forgiveness when I have hurt or fractured another. The forgiveness and the retention come from the other that is the paradoxical axiom of forgiveness. Christ on the cross forgave those who hurt him, from the Apostles in their ministry, they forgave those who hurt them; like them in order to heal we must forgive those who hurt us. This seems insane, but it is paradoxical, one must lose

his life to gain it, to heal we forgive those who hurt us. This is both challenging and difficult. This is Divine and Human. Simply put we can say, when I sin, I hurt God and he forgives me in Confession, when someone hurts me, I forgive them, so I heal.

Forgiveness: What is Forgiveness? Forgiveness can be described as an act of the will by which we decide to let go of a hurt. Our associations with the other person after the hurt has been forgiven will greatly depend on our prior relationship with that person.

Why Forgive and reconcile life's hurt? Failure to forgive and reconcile life's hurts diminishes our relationship with God, others and self. Forgiveness is a process (10 fundamental truths) Forgiveness is God's way of dealing with life's hurts Forgiveness only happens when we truly desire it, while recognizing the major role that God's grace plays in the process. Frequently the reason for failure of our efforts to forgive is because we do not want to forgive.

Forgiveness is a process: it takes time and patience. There is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation of a hurt. There is a difference between the forgiveness of a hurt and the healing of a hurt. Often the reason we have a difficult time forgiving another is because we have a hard time forgiving ourselves Sometimes we cannot journey the forgiveness process alone; we need the counsel of a good and trusted friend, (the friend must be good and trusted). Before praying about hurt, we should make sure we take time to name it, (label it), own it saying it is mind and express any feelings connected with it. Forgiveness has for us two critical elements, it is paradoxical and change: I choose to forgive: making a decision Paradoxically I need to forgive the one who hurt me so I can heal and on the surface that seems insane.

As we glimpse into Forgiveness it is a critical element in our everyday life. If it were just between God and us, it would not be as difficult, but our neighbors are included. If it were only between God and us as some tell us it would be easier, that is the Divine Level, but included is our spiritual and religious relationship with God is our neighbor. This is part of the human element of forgiveness, that God throw into the mix. A retrospective glimpse of one of our opening prayers, (Collect) we prayed, "Lord you build your sacred law upon you and our neighbor", and no matter how hard we try to avoid this we are unable, because the young lawyer ask the question for us in the gospel when he asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor"?

JESUS TOLD HIM A STORY! WE KNOW THE STORY