

'CHALLENGES, GOOD NEWS, FORGIVENESS & PRAYER' - HOMILY - 17 SEPTEMBER 2017

POPE FRANCIS

Pope Francis speaks about so many issues in today's world.

In understanding his leadership style and direction, we could all share our own insights.

WHAT ARE YOUR INSIGHTS INTO HIM? (pause).

His love of God's Word is there for all to see.

His living out of the Good News of Jesus brings him **JOY**.

In his [*Evangelii Gaudium \(The Joy of the Gospel\)*](#) of 24 November, 2013 he reflects on the **CRISIS TODAY OF COMMUNAL COMMITMENT** in Chapter 2.

- *"The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident."*
- *"Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "disposable" culture which is now spreading."*
- *"To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalisation of indifference has developed."*
- *"In the prevailing culture, priority is given to the outward, the immediate, the visible, the quick, the superficial and the provisional. What is real gives way to appearances."*

While identifying many challenges, Pope Francis goes on to highlight **many possibilities of sowing Good News and being open to the Holy Spirit**.

**He invites us to live the Good News daily.
To recognise the challenges. To live joyfully.**

BUT HOW DO WE PRAY AND FORGIVE?

PROCESS

We heard in last Sunday's passage about steps, about a process of community conflict resolution.

In today's Gospel Matthew 18:21-35 we hear the call to forgiveness and the conversion of heart to forgive just as we would want God to forgive us.

JESUS ON FORGIVENESS

*'Then Peter came and said to him,
"Lord, if another member of the church sins against me,
how often should I forgive?
As many as seven times?"
Jesus said to him,
"Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'*

But what about someone who only forgives partially, half-heartedly, or expects to be forgiven, without having personally to forgive another.

PARABLE OF JESUS ON FORGIVENESS

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.

When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

*So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying,
'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.'
And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.*

*But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.'
Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him,
'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'
But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.*

When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

*Then his lord summoned him and said to him,
'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?'
And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.*

*So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you,
if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*

SOME KEY WORDS AND PHRASES IN FORGIVENESS FROM THIS GOSPEL PASSAGE:

RELEASED HIM.

FROM WHAT DOES GOD RELEASE ME?

HOW AM I CAPTIVE?

HOW DOES GOD RELEASE ME?

FORGAVE HIS DEBT

WHAT IS MY DEBT TO GOD AND OTHERS?

PATIENCE

WHY IS GOD PATIENT WITH ME?

HOW AM I PATIENT WITH OTHERS?

PLEADED

HOW DO I ASK GOD FROM MY VERY DEPTH?

PITY (COMPASSION)

The Greek word here is for a compassion that moves us inside.

It is the same word used in the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke's Gospel, when the father is moved with compassion and runs to greet the son.

God is active in compassion for us.

FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER FROM YOUR HEART

Jesus reminds us that we are all related in the family of God.

Everyone is either a sister or a brother.

Forgiveness is not just an idea, it is heartfelt.

DO WE SOMETIMES SAY THE WORDS THAT I FORGIVE YOU, WITHOUT A GENUINE HEARTFELT FORGIVING OF THE PERSON?

DO WE SAY WE FORGIVE, MERELY TO MAKE THE PERSON GO AWAY?

MERCY

We learnt during the Jubilee Year of Mercy, how essential mercy is in our lives.

To live our faith joyfully, we need to be merciful.

Our lives have many dimensions.

We might think of an occasion where God has called us

To **ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE**,

To **CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**,

To **HEAL**,

To **FORGIVE**,

To **BE MERCIFUL**, and

To **DISCERN** a way ahead.

Multi-faceted. Advocacy, Safety, Healing, Forgiveness, Merciful, Discerning.

We bring it all before God in prayer.

PRAYER

When we come before God in prayer,
already feeling overwhelmed by what is happening in our lives, you are invited
to name it,
to feel it,
to consciously hand it over to God,
to feel the release within you,
and with God's blessing,
ask God what to do. – to discern.
Go at God's pace, not out of our own compulsion.

If God hands it back to you, it is with a new attitude and perspective.
Let us take an example.

Young Joe,
concerned about issues that some people face in their lives.
named it in quiet prayer, felt it heavily, and handed it over to God.
Then enjoyed the release of tension and concern.
Just stayed with God for a while in peace,
Renewed, he accepted back the responsibility to pray for them and support them.

This blessing enables us to be more attentive and joyful in ourselves,
and hence more energy to be there for others.
Carrying the cross with Jesus, not dragging it along the path exhausted and alone.
Being open to God's blessings.
Being open to living the Good News of God daily.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Challenges, Good News, Forgiveness and Prayer – 17 September]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/091717.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook17092017>]

Other References:

[Evangelii Gaudium - The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis](#)