

## *How many times must I forgive?*

Homily, 10th March, 2015

Mat 18,21-19,1

father G. Paparone o.p.

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My dearest,

I have narrowed down today's longer Reading to the two verses you have just read (Mat 18,21-22) because the Lord then sets forth a practical example.

The heart of today's Gospel is *forgiveness*.

**From a theological perspective** we could say, "**forgiveness is the heart of Christian Faith**".

The Word became incarnate in the person of Jesus to bring His forgiveness to the world. Everything Jesus did during His life, everything He taught signifies the magnificent work of reconciliation that the Father wants to achieve.

He wants to draw all of us to Him. He awaits us like the father awaited the prodigal son in the parable of *the merciful Father* (Luke 15,1-3.11-32).

**To forgive, therefore, is the essence of the Gospel, is the essence of the *Kingdom of God*, and is the essence of our spiritual life.**

Without true forgiveness we are merely pursuers of illusions!

Sometimes you hear people saying: "I forgive you but I will not forget, and I do not want to have anything to do with so and so".

**In fact here is where we enter the psychological sphere:** to forget or to forget not.

Man's heart is mysterious, certainly, but I believe that **sincere forgiveness is what heals wounds, cleanses our emotional memory from the evil we have endured, from suffering.**

Although we might not be able, psychologically to reach this level, **we must beg God that he might grant us this capacity to forgive through grace.**

In **our prayers** we should be asking Him to grant us **the grace of forgiveness and to be able to forget**. If not, this negative emotional memory, these wounds will continue to bleed and burden our hearts with:

- **A sore** that continues to niggle at our days;
- **A weight** that continues to disrupt our inner balance, our happiness;
- **A cancer** that corrupts and devours our peace, our joy;

**Without deep, sincere, authentic forgiveness there can be neither peace nor true freedom.**

Let us, therefore, ask the Lord to grant us this **grace**.

We ask for many material graces, we must ask for spiritual grace too: **that of forgiveness, but above all my dearest, grace to forgive ourselves.**

Praised be Jesus Christ.