

The Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 09/17/2023

“Forgive your neighbor’s injustices; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?”

Based on the first reading, we must ask ourselves why anyone would ever hold on to anger. It’s pretty obvious if we hold on to it and refuse to forgive we won’t be forgiven.

And what’s really frightening is that we may be holding on to something that’s only real in our own minds. In other words, we may think we have all the facts and are justified in being angry but the truth may be very far from our perception.

Could you imagine being condemned for all eternity because you were angry over something that never really even happened? It probably occurs more than we know.

Quite often we only have half of the truth at our disposal and we concoct the rest of the story in our own minds...or someone else

puts it together for us and we never even try to get to the bottom of it – the truth. Instead we hold on to a lie and feed the anger.

But even if we have all the facts and the other party is totally in the wrong we still must forgive in order to be forgiven.

And not just once or twice or even the seven times that Saint Peter suggested but seventy-seven times according to our Lord.

In other words, there will never come a time in which we are off the hook so we can hang on to anger and nurse a grudge.

Forgiveness is absolutely necessary in the spiritual realm but it's also quite beneficial in the physical and mental realm as well.

Studies show that the stress caused by anger can lead to problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, and mental health issues such as increased anxiety and depression.

Our Lord created us out of nothing so he's not only the great Divine Physician but he can also fix every other problem that we might have as well.

It's quite normal to get angry and feel hurt when someone offends us or when we think they have but Jesus makes it quite clear that we must let it go and move on. And herein lies the key.

Health professionals tell us to process the hurt. Initially getting upset may have been an appropriate response so let it out. But we need to take some responsibility too. It's seldom just a one-sided affair. Then we need to learn from our experience. We can't change the other party...only ourselves. So we seek out support from wise and trustworthy people and finally we move on.

Let's decide to let go of what we can't control and put the past behind us because we may just live longer and healthier lives.

However, living a longer and healthier life now really doesn't matter in the end because Jesus promises that we will live with him for all eternity in the next life if we only strive to forgive now.

"Peter approached Jesus and asked him, 'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'"