

XXIV Sunday in Ordinary Time: Forgive so as to be forgiven

“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.’” (Mt 18: 21-22)

This week “the word of life” clearly speaks to us about forgiveness and comes directly from Christ, a measure for attaining the infinite: “forgive seventy-seven times,” meaning, always forgive. Thus, forgiveness is established as a fundamental characteristic of Christian charity, as something inherent to Christianity. Later, when we see Christ on the Cross forgiving His enemies, we will understand to what extreme this must go.

The question lies in knowing if forgiveness equals forgetfulness, or if forgiving implies not protecting ourselves from those who can still hurt us in the future, and we know have the potential to hurt us again. Forgiveness is not at odds with common sense, and sometimes, certain positions are the greatest enemies of Christ’s message because what they ask for is practically impossible to fulfill. However, we must not forget that forgiving means, in a way, forgetting and risking being hurt again. But forgiving does not imply ignoring the intention of the person who has harmed us, but rather giving him a second chance, as long as he seriously shows a willingness to take advantage of it. It means helping him, even if he does not deserve it. It means not taking vengeance on him, even if we have the opportunity to do so.

It also means forgiving ourselves, for the measure we use will be used to measure out to us. Beginning first with God and continuing with those neighbors whom we have hurt.

Purpose: Analyze who your “enemies” are: those you do not like or who have hurt you. Begin by forgiving them and by praying for them and, if you can, by helping them.