

Gesu Homily 24th Sunday in OT_A

Readings: Sir: 27:30-28:7; Ps 103: 1-4, 9-12; Rom 14: 7-9; MT 18:21-35

Fr. Roosevelt Leriche - Pastor - Sts. Simon and Jude Parish, Morne Lopital, Haiti

Good morning (afternoon), my sisters and brothers. I am Fr. Roosevelt Leriche and I have come to Gesu Parish from your sister parish, Sts. Simon and Jude, in Mon Lopital, Haiti. I want to talk with you about my parish today. But before that, I want to break open the Word of God with you. Mercy and forgiveness should be at the heart of the Christian life.

Yet as our 1st Reading wisely reminds us, often we cherish our wrath, nourish our anger, refuse mercy to those who have done us wrong. Our Lord, too, strikes close to home in our Gospel passage with His realistic portrayal of the wicked servant - who would not forgive a fellow servant's debt, even though his own debt had just been forgiven by their master.

It can't be that way in the kingdom, the Church. In the Old Testament, "seven" is frequently a number associated with mercy and the forgiveness of sins. The just man sins seven times daily; there is a sevenfold sprinkling of the blood for atonement of sins we learn in the Books of Proverbs and Leviticus. But Jesus tells Peter that we must forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven. That means every time.

We are to be merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful, Jesus tells us in the Gospels. But why? Why does Jesus repeatedly warn that we not expect forgiveness for our trespasses unless we are willing to forgive others their trespasses against us?

Because, as St Paul reminds us in our 2nd Reading, we are the Lord's. Each of us has been purchased at a great price by the blood of Christ shed on the Cross for us. As we hear in our Responsorial Psalm today, though we deserved to die for our sins, God doesn't deal with us according to our crimes. The mercy and forgiveness we show to others should be the heartfelt expression of our gratitude to God for the mercy and forgiveness He has shown to us.

This is why we should remember our last days, set our ill will aside and stop judging others. We know that one day we will have to stand before the judgement seat and give account for what we have done with the new life given us by Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism. So we forgive each other from the heart, overlook each other's faults and await the reward of God's kindness and compassion.

The Caribbean area has been in the news lately along with the hurricanes which struck Texas and Florida. Fortunately, we did not sustain a lot of damage from these storms. Port au Prince, the capital of Haiti, is located about 2 hours flying time from Miami, Florida. Eighty percent of our people live on under two dollars (American) a day. The Haitian Constitution states that everyone is entitled to an education. But the Government doesn't have the resources to provide it. Only fifty percent of children get the opportunity to attend school because one has to pay for tuition, books and uniforms. There are high infant and maternal mortality rates in this, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Seventy percent of the people in Haiti are Catholic. The faith is strong there, but the financial resources, not so much. By the work of many hands, we have rebuilt our Church which was destroyed in the terrible earthquake seven years ago.

I want to thank all of you here at Gesu for what you have done to help the people of my mountain parish. You aid us in so many ways with the "GIFTS OF LIFE" projects! These include the Lunch Program at the Parish School; the Nurse at the Medical Clinic (which is the only medical resource in the village); the Water Project which provides clean water for our community; Food for the Elders; a Salary for our School Cook; and now the recent Chicken Production Project which will help us to become more self-sustainable. Thank you!! We ask for your generous contributions today as our programs grow! We have so many needs at the parish and so few resources to meet them.

Please pray for the people of Haiti, especially for Sts. Simon and Jude Parish, as we continue to pray for you. And please be generous in the Mission Appeal Collection to continue supporting the work with which you are so closely connected in my parish. In doing this, you are living out Jesus's message of caring for our neighbor, of having compassion for others who haven't had all the blessings that you, in America, possess.

May Almighty God bless you and reward you for your generosity. And, on behalf of the people of Sts. Simon and Jude Parish, our brothers and sisters in the faith, I want to say in advance *mesi, mesi anpil* - thank you, thank you very much for your support! May God bless America! May God bless Haiti! And may God bless you for your generosity today! Amen.

Checks for the 2017 Mission Appeal can be made out to GESU PARISH and in the subject line, please add the words MISSION APPEAL. Envelopes are in the bulletin and in church for donations. Please return it in the collection basket or at the Parish Center.