

Homily. 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 26/27 August 2023.

Forgiveness and reconciliation is a two way street and a process that's unfolded over time, not just a moment in time. As Christians our starting point with this is always with God and is based on the mercy, justice and truth of our own reconciliation and redemption in the Cross of Christ.

Peter, since he was open to God's revelation about the true identity and mission of Jesus, was blessed with a power to bind and to loosen. We usually associate this with the Pope and with the Church itself. The truth though is that a share in this blessing is given to us who by our Peter-like faith are open to the ongoing revelation and way of Christ. As the Pope and Church have some authority to bind and loosen so, too, do we, the Lords disciples today, in our daily dealings and interactions with others.

When conflict sunders apart our relationships and misunderstandings blight our families and friendships, we are empowered in the Spirit to choose between freeing others from their bonds or keeping them tied up tightly by their faults. Given the example of Christ, who gave himself away to free us from all of our debts, it's clear that forgiveness, reconciliation, unbinding and loosing people is our main aim and that engaging in the process of merciful healing and wholeness making is our way forward.

It goes without saying that both parties to the injury and hurt have to be open to this work and that the principles of justice, fairness and the facts of the matter demand respect. If one party simply won't join in, denying their part in the problem, refusing to engage in making things right again, there's still work for us to do. Surely none of us wishes to long carry

heavy inner burdens of anger and bitterness? Focusing instead on God's mercy, we come in time to learn how to lay aside our our hurts, sadness and resentments. In this effort prayer, our closeness to our Lord in the Sacrament of Penance and in the Eucharist are our rich medicines.

Peter was given the keys of the Kingdom of mercy and justice because he listened to God and recognised Jesus and the Christ. Yet, as we'll hear next weekend, not very long afterwards he stopped listening to God and started heeding only his own voice, that of power over others and of comfort. This brought offence and division into his relationship with Jesus.

When offence comes between us and others and thereby with God it's essential that we re-calibrate the ears of our minds and hearts back onto the channel of Christ. There we'll hear that he came not to be served, but to serve and to give away his life as a ransom for many, us included. Then, with the other party, or by ourselves if they won't participate in the process, our work of becoming once again whole and holy commences.

The love of the Lord is eternal and God does not forsake the work of God's hands. We prayed these words in the Psalm only a few minutes ago. If this is true then we can't afford the luxury of forsaking others, or ourselves. Rather we decide to welcome the ongoing healing work of God's mercy that graciously comes to perfect and sustain us. We do this so that in everything we may come to please God who is unfathomably deep in the riches of wisdom, knowledge and of right judgement.