

Living the Word: Psalm 103, 1-13

The psalms are the hymn book of the Bible and this is a wonderful hymn of praise. The opening with its reference to illness suggests it may have been written as a personal thanksgiving after sickness. The first five verses stress the blessings we have received from God, as they celebrate His forgiveness and love. We rejoice to be satisfied with God's goodness, which almost certainly means actually knowing the divine presence. Moses, in the Book of Exodus (33:19) asks to see the glory of God and the Almighty agrees that His 'goodness' will pass by him. The last two verses of the psalm stress the importance of justice for God, as shown by the way He used Moses to rescue the Israelites from the injustice of slavery in Egypt. The New Testament makes clear that Christ knew and loved the psalms, and believed himself to be fulfilling them. Christ dispensed God's justice and mercy upon those in need. This is a psalm that all of us can prayerfully recite after experiencing a sense of the forgiveness and mercy of God in our own lives in doing so.

Elements of the Mass The Great Amen

The Great Amen is the name traditionally given to the 'Amen' said or sung by the people at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer. It is the most significant 'Amen' in the whole liturgy as it expresses the people's assent to, and belief in, all that the priest has just done on their behalf during the Eucharistic Prayer. It particularly expresses their belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the newly consecrated elements, which at this point are elevated so that the people can see them. This 'Amen' also signifies the people's desire to join themselves to the sacrifice of Jesus which is being set forth on the altar: just as Christ offered himself on the cross, we offer our gifts and ourselves in union with him. In the fourth century, St Jerome wrote that in Rome, when the 'Great Amen' was proclaimed, 'all the pagan temples trembled'.

17th September 2023

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time



Everyone is familiar with the petition in the Lord's Prayer: 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Today's Gospel provides the Divine reasoning behind that prayer. First, the parable makes it quite clear it is cruel and wicked to accept forgiveness but not to give it. Secondly, it spells out the consequences of withholding forgiveness – we end up being tortured. Inevitably, confronted with the injustice of hard heartedness and being made aware of our cruel vicious judgment of others, we end up with a tortured conscience, and a burden of guilt. God's justice will not be denied. Being unforgiving is to shut ourselves off from God's love and mercy. Thirdly, the profound irony of the parable is that the man at the centre of the story was forgiven for a debt far greater than the one owed to him. The forgiveness and mercy that Jesus has won for us in his death and resurrection is created by a love so tender and merciful that it is beyond our imagination. If we begin with reflecting on this truth we will have no trouble in forgiving someone else from our heart.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 18: 21-35

Collect

Look upon us, O God, Creator and ruler of all things, and, that we may feel the working of your mercy, grant that we may serve you with all our heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.