

FORGIVENESS

Thinking about forgiveness is not that easy, yet every time I read the newspapers or watch television we hear about people who do wrong and the cause suffering to others. And then people always talk about getting even with each other, getting their own back. Now, you know that is quite understandable because to forgive somebody is very difficult and costly. If you or I are going to ask to be forgiven for what we have done then we really have to start by looking closely at the damage that we have done, at what we have caused people to suffer. So we have to start by taking our own actions seriously and we have to be resolved to change - to behave differently in the future. If we are asked to forgive somebody else who has hurt us that is difficult as well, because that means that we have to let go of our hurt, to say all right I will put that behind me. It means changing our mind and our heart - it means setting off on a whole new path.

Now, Jesus, who teaches us what is true, he goes further, he even asks us to forgive our enemies. He said: "Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute you". Think of what he himself did. When he was being crucified on the cross, he asked his Father to forgive those who were crucifying him. He said: "Because they do not know what they are doing". He made excuses for those who were driving the nails into his own hands. So Jesus is the one who refuses to retaliate, he is not interested in getting even, even though it means he dies. Now in our Christian faith, following Jesus, forgiveness is a gift of God. It is not something that we can do of ourselves. Certainly we have to understand ourselves as deeply as we can, we have to be willing to face what we have done, we have to be generous even towards ourselves, but in the end we believe that if we are to forgive another person, God has got to be working in us. We need the grace of God. God's power in our minds and hearts in order that we take that extra step and truly forgive another person.

There is a little bit of scripture that I think not many people read. You could if you look at chapter 16 in the gospel of St. John. There is a little phrase and it says this: The Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin. Now I think that means that it is only when God gives us light in our minds and a new attitude in our hearts do we really understand the true meaning of sin; the real importance of what we have done wrong; the real impact of the hurt that we have caused. So what we believe, and what you are studying is true, it is only under the influence of the Holy Spirit, only with God within us, that we can truly forgive and make this world new.

