

February 12, 2017

7th Sunday in ordinary Time

Turn the other cheek! Offer your coat as well! Go the extra mile! Really?

*Lord, help us be willing to turn the other cheek
if that helps us all become the kind of person we want to be*

Forgiveness

Jesus frequently counsel his followers to forgive injustice. Biblical historian, John P. Pilch, has Jesus in today's Gospel describing three scenes, almost funny to the people of his day, in which a disciple humiliated by another is urged to forego retaliation.

“Slapping another. Being struck by either hand was an insult, especially when done by the left hand which was reserved for toilet functions. In saying to offer the other cheek, Jesus is saying, ‘*Don't seek to retaliate according to the law, turn the other cheek as well.*’

“Offering your cloak. The cloak was absolutely essential not only as a piece of clothing but as a sleeping bag. Giving your cloak as well would leave one naked, a shameful condition to say the least. Jesus is saying, ‘*Don't seek to retaliate according to the law. Offer your cloak as well.*’

“Go the extra mile. It was legal for soldiers to force citizens to carry their military gear up to one mile. Carrying the gear was humiliation enough; being forced to do so by a traitorous fellow citizen was even more humiliating ([Mt 5:41](#)). Jesus is saying, ‘*Don't seek to retaliate according to the law. Go the extra mile as well.*’”

How does Forgiving bring Healing?

Christ is counseling us to *love* those who hurt us. In exhorting us to turn the other cheek, he is not commanding us to be an enabler of people doing bad things. He is exhorting us to love - even our enemies - *as ourselves*. In doing this, we are helping others to become what we ourselves want to be.

This sounds wonderful. Who wouldn't want to receive that kind of grace. But this becomes extremely difficult to do when we are the ones we have to forgive. What does it mean to turn the other cheek to ourselves?

South Fork Camp

Last Friday evening at the South Fork camp, I saw my inmate brothers doing just that. They were not feeling sorry for themselves for how they were raised as children or treated as adults. Their whole focus was on how they could recover and restore broken relationships. They are trying so hard to ask forgiveness from those they have hurt as well as for themselves. It is in doing this that they are healing themselves.

It was inspiring. They helped me to see that I am in prison too - in a prison of my own doing. We are all in some sort of prison of our own doing. We too, in wanting to reconcile and heal those we have hurt, are healing ourselves. This is a Christian way of life. We not only should turn the other cheek, we need to.

*Dear God, please help us to forgive the ones who have hurt us. Help us to relinquish the anger that we are experiencing so that we can walk in the fruit of love, joy, peace, gentleness and self-control. Heal us and release any bitterness that we may be harboring. Please guide us, Great Spirit, to do what is most pleasing to You and helpful to ourselves.
Thank You. In Jesus' name, We pray.*