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Thursday's Gospel: Through Forgiveness to Love

Gospel for Thursday in the 10th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 5:20-26*)

“For I tell you, unless your
righteousness exceeds that of the
scribes and Pharisees, you will never
enter the kingdom of heaven.

“You have heard that it was said to
the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and
whoever kills shall be liable to
judgment.’ But I say to you that
everyone who is angry with his

brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny."

Commentary

Christ continues teaching the people on the Mount of the Beatitudes. The disciples are sitting at his feet, and behind them are a multitude of people from all walks of life listening attentively and trying not to miss a single word. He opens up a broad horizon for them, a horizon that offers a new and fuller life.

To do so, he speaks about forgiveness. There is no point in presenting oneself before God if one has not first been reconciled with one's brother. Seeking reconciliation, having a merciful heart that sees beyond the other person's limitations and mistakes, is a prerequisite for worshiping God.

For every offense between persons is an offense against God. It is a way of saying to God, "that person before me (my husband, wife, brother, friend, co-worker, neighbor, whoever it may be) is not a good person; he or

she is not a gift, a gift for me. You made a mistake by creating them and putting them next to me.”

And the offense can only be overcome through forgiveness. But forgiveness is not about forgetting, about ignoring what has happened. The offense has to be repaired and healed, since it is a wound caused in one's own heart and in that of others.

Forgiveness leads us to reconciliation, to a renewal of the relationship that has been broken. It enables us to look into the other person's eyes again and “remake” them with that look. When we forgive we are giving the other person the possibility of being born again, of being renewed. We are telling them: “That mistake, that offense, doesn't form your identity. You are a gift from God to me and I want to renew you with my forgiveness.”

Forgiving others thus becomes an act that gives glory and praise to God.

But true forgiveness can only be achieved through communion with the one who has borne our guilt and has forgiven us totally and radically. As Benedict XVI said, forgiveness is a Christological reality: “It reminds us of the One who through forgiveness has paid the price of descending into the miseries of human existence and death on the Cross.”^[1]

Only in Christ are we able to truly forgive others, and thus give pleasing worship to God in our daily lives. Through forgiveness we enter into the depths of God’s love.

^[1]Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. I, *From the Baptism to the Transfiguration*, Madrid, 2007, p. 196.

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