

So back in 2012, my first time being a pastor, I was assigned to Fulda, Currie, and Westbrook, MN, just north of Worthington - another priest, Father Andrew Beerman, who I had known from Rochester and the seminary, was newly assigned to Adrian, MN

I got him hooked on golf and we became golfing buddies, often playing together on our day off, on Mondays

Well it just so happened that there was a golf course in south Sioux Falls called Bakker's Crossing - this course had free golf for any clergy on Mondays - not just Catholic priests, but any clergy of any denomination or religion - so throughout the years, we have gotten a lot of free golf - we've probably kind of abused the system

Well one Monday, I think it was Memorial Day, they told us that we had to pay since it was a holiday - in our fallen humanity, at first we were upset that we had to pay - then some minutes later we came to our senses - we had probably played hundreds of dollars worth of free golf - if we had to pay \$40 to play this one time, it will be okay

This like this happen when I become prideful, when I think the world and life revolves around me - I was an adult when this happened

Ideally though, this is more of how we operate when we are a child or an adolescent - ideally an adult has matured to the point where they do know it is not all about him or her

Statistically, couples that have a child in the first year of marriage have a lower divorce rate - Dr. Janet Smith, a Catholic speaker, has a theory as to why this is true - she says that as a spouse, you can kind of get away with self-centered - it's not like your spouse is going to die if you don't sacrifice for them - however, a baby is so not that way - a baby is utterly dependent on you - so Dr. Janet Smith says when you have a child, you almost instantly become a better person - you start to sacrifice and do things for someone other than yourself - you become a better citizen - you start caring about the school system in the area - you start to care about the safety of the playground equipment at the local park - we are called to live for God and for others - we are called to live for something bigger than ourselves, or better yet, someone, namely Jesus

In the second reading, St. Paul tells the Romans that none of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself - St. Paul goes on to say that if we live, we are to live for the Lord - if we die, we are to die for the Lord - so whether we live or die, we are the Lord's - we belong to God because of our baptism

One monumental sign that we don't live for ourselves is in our ability to forgive - a selfish person can't see past the harm and hurt someone has caused them - again, the world revolves around them - however, a mature person can see that extending forgiveness and mercy are more important and better for everyone involved

In our first reading, Sirach writes, "Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven."

Wow! - this sounds a lot like the Our Father prayer when we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

And if we are angry with someone, how can we expect healing from the Lord? - studies show that anger has a negative physiological effect on our bodies - forgiveness and mercy is not just good for our soul - it is also good for our bodies

So we need to overlook other's faults - for our own good, for their good, and the good of all

And obviously this theme of forgiveness and mercy is in our Gospel today

We talk about second chances all the time - two chances to get something right is way better than one chance

So St. Peter thinks he is being excessively generous when he approaches Jesus and asks, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as 7 times?" - St. Peter is asking how wide should his mercy be?

Jesus responds, "I say to you, not 7 times, but 77 times." - don't be like my brother and me and start counting down from 77 -

Jesus means that there should be no tracking of the times you have extended mercy and forgiveness - we should forgive others as many times as they offend us

And why should we do this? - because God, in His perfection, is infinitely good and holy - so every offense, every sin, every wrong doing is not just an offense against someone else, but also an infinite offense against God

We cannot pay the debt we owe for our sins - thus Jesus came and died on the Cross that we might have the chance at forgiveness, mercy, and eternal life

So Jesus tells the parable of the servant and the merciful king - the servant comes before the king - he owes the king an amount he can never pay back in one lifetime - so the master, the king, decides that he should be sold along with his wife, children, and property to begin to pay back what the servant owed - the servant begs for more time - what does he receive? - something better - the servant doesn't get more time to pay off his debt - no, he gets the entire debt forgiven

However, the story then takes a turn for the worse - the servant quickly transitions from debtor to creditor - he demands that a fellow servant pay him back immediately - this amount was much smaller than the amount the king just forgave the first servant of - since the second servant can't pay it, he has the fellow servant put in prison

When the king hears of this, he rightfully get upset with the first servant and has him tortured until he paid back the whole debt

Jesus says God the Father will do the same with us unless we forgive others from our hearts

Again, this is what we pray for every time we pray the Our Father: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

God mercy and forgiveness is infinite - St. Faustina says in her diary that if we knew the depths of God's mercy, we would run to Him

When we look at a Crucifix, we should see God's love, mercy, and forgiveness - St. Stephen, the first martyr, said the same words that Christ said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing."

And even in our times, Saint Pope John Paul 2, went to visit his would be assassin in jail and forgave him

Again, God's love and mercy and forgiveness is infinite - He showers us with His supernatural love, mercy, and forgiveness - because of this, we need to show love, mercy, and forgiveness to one another