

TRUE FORGIVENESS?

Even if we are one family in Christ, there is something negative that can transpire in our midst. In our brokenness, we are bound to sin, offend and hurt one another. Thus, in Mt 18:21-19:1, God exhorts us to confront and give each other unlimited forgiveness, the way God has forgiven us.

When remorse for one's sins can hardly be seen and neither can restitution be offered, the heart of the aggrieved hardens and a hurt becomes a grudge. When this happens, one may turn away from any possible reconciliation and do what he abhors. He fails to practice what he preaches and his actions and related witnessing become far from the ideals of a Christian disciple.

Because sin has prevailed in our world, God highlights man's continuing need for reconciliation. The one who is hurt and aggrieved is to confront the offender in an effort to gain reconciliation. If the offender does not acknowledge his fault, one should bring other witnesses because reconciliation will never happen without the confession by the one at fault just as reconciliation cannot transpire without the forgiveness to be given by the offended party. The willingness of the aggrieved to approach the offender indicates one's willingness to forgive.

'Forgive and forget' is always everyone's advice to people who are hurting. But the advice does not become an antidote to any hurt; neither does it turn into a healing balm when it does not flow from a sincere and repentant heart. An unforgiving heart will eventually flow into one's actions, one's words and one's witnessing. It compounds one's sinfulness and leads others to more sin.

It is unthinkable that at times we, who are forgiven, fail to forgive. In our brokenness, we can only receive forgiveness yet find it impossible to forgive from the heart. Our forgiveness is highly conditional. We cannot forgive seventy times seven, even in the Name of our Lord!

Today let us aim at being better persons, at being reconciled with God's family by baring our souls to one another and seeking God and His grace so that we may receive His compassion and in so doing be able to give love and understanding to those who have hurt us. True forgiveness comes from the heart, authentic and consistent with our actions and God's Word, made possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2006 Issue