

Faith to Forgive Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time Monday, November 7, 2016
8:15 AM Ti 1:1-9; **Lk 17:1-6** (You have to have the faith to uproot a mulberry tree that empowers you to actually accept them in all their flaws and pray that the love of God fill both of you in a sort of transforming way.)

“And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.”

Now this forgiveness is of course an expression of love, but it’s also an expression of **faith**. That’s why it jumps right into this: “Increase our faith.” And Jesus says, well, you don’t need more faith. You have plenty. “If you just had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could uproot a mulberry tree.” These are all of course metaphors. Trees have roots, whole systems as big as the branches, so to uproot a tree is a mighty act, but **faith can do mighty acts. The mighty act that is now being considered is the forgiveness of our sisters and brothers who injure us.**

This is so fundamental to the gospel; it’s simply overlooked too much. In regard to the **covenant with Moses, fundamental to that was a surrender of all right to retaliate against one’s enemies, to avenge one’s injuries**—fundamental. There is no such thing as covenant without that. But even that Jesus was not completely happy with. He believed that it didn’t go far enough because it wasn’t full enough of the divine. It had a certain sort of justice to it: injury mediated through the law, punishment meted out according to some sort of basic rational plan, limited to certain stipulations. So it was an advance from dog-eat-dog, but **not enough of an advance if the goal is to be Godlike**. If the measure is how God is, being perfect as the Father is perfect, being as compassionate as the Father is compassionate, then in that sense the law doesn’t make it; the bar is too low, so to speak.

So Jesus now is challenging his disciples to be really godly and to recognize that God’s love is a kind of pity. That’s what *eleison* really means, *Kyrie, eleison*. It is a kind of a pity. It doesn’t look down on people, but **it understands their practical inability to be different, and so accepts them as they are, all flawed.** That’s *eleison*. It doesn’t say that in the long run people can’t change. They can, but you can’t wait for that to accept them as they are. And that’s one of the big problems with the world, even Christians. They want people to change first. Well, they

can't. **You have to have the faith to uproot a mulberry tree that empowers you to actually accept them in all their flaws and pray that the love of God fill both of you in a sort of transforming way.**

Now one of the problems with our Church and our tradition is that the great **Thomas Aquinas**, and he was a great man, but he didn't realize how great he was. He was a humble man, but he was given extraordinary awareness of life and didn't realize how extraordinary it was. He **assumed that everyone had the powers he did.** He assumed even children at the age of seven already had **the use of reason.** This is highly debatable. It's highly debatable how much people use reason period! **Our theology has always assumed that because we are born with this potential that we are exercising it in our daily lives. Well, no, we are not,** and we have to realize this. This is one of the most profound flaws that we carry around within us. This is one of the most profound forms of **brokenness that we carry around in our earthen vessels, that although we do have this capacity in some degree to be reasonable and rational and think things through and weigh things and find what is truly good, we don't.** It takes too much effort; we don't do it. We just choose blindly.

And that is very close to what it means to be a sinner. **A sinner is one who simply chooses blindly, not knowing what's going on,** not necessarily deliberately evil like Satan, but blind, and **very often willfully blind over the long run,** because we do get insights. **We are given graces to see, but then we don't pay attention.** We keep going in our habitual ways. We don't want to be challenged too much. That's threatening. We don't want to be threatened. **And that's what has to be forgiven. And we have to start with ourselves, and then we have to extend that to everyone else.** And that takes the faith to uproot a mulberry tree. But it allows us to receive the love which is God.