

Fr. Martin's Reflection – September 17, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I do hope you had the opportunity to visit the Eucharistic Miracle display in St. Mary school hall. If you haven't, you still have another week. Can I also suggest that you bring headphones that either plug into your phone or Bluetooth to your phone. There is a QR code that you can scan in either English or Spanish that will allow you to hear the backstory leading up to each miracle. I would also recommend watching the short video on the life of Blessed Carlo Acutis – for all parents worried about their children and needing inspiration and hope, Blessed Carlo Acutis is that inspiration and hope. Ask him to intercede for your children.

Abraham Lincoln's secretary of war, Edwin Stanton, had some trouble with a major general who accused him, in abusive terms, of favoritism. Stanton complained to Lincoln, who suggested that he write the officer a sharp letter. Stanton did so, and showed the strongly worded statement to the president, who applauded its powerful language. "What are you going to do with it?" he asked. Surprised at the question, Stanton said: "Send it, of course." Lincoln shook his head. "You don't want to send that letter," he said. "Put it in the stove. That's what I do when I've written a letter when I am angry. It's a good letter and you had a good time writing it and feel better. Now, burn it and write another."

Lincoln could have been following the advice in today's first reading, which underlines the futility of vengeance: **If a man nurses' anger against another, can he then demand compassion from the Lord? Showing no pity for a man like himself, can he then plead for his own sins?**

Nursing anger or cherishing resentment is dangerous for our health, indeed fatal: it disables us and renders us defenseless when we look for our own sins to be forgiven.

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times." Mt 18:21

In today's gospel Matthew continues to deal with relations between Christians, focusing on the need for forgiveness between members of the community. Peter asks Jesus how often he should forgive his brother, then answers his own question by suggesting seven times. The Jewish tradition taught that God forgives three times and punishes on the fourth occasion; it was not believed that injured people could be more gracious than God, so forgiveness was limited to three times. According to that tradition Peter's measure is generous; but according to Jesus it is radically insufficient. In his reply Jesus reverses the old law of vengeance: "Sevenfold vengeance is taken to Cain, but seventy-sevenfold for Lamech" (Gen 4:24). Just as in the old days there was not limit to hatred and vengeance, so among Christians there is to be no limit to mercy and forgiveness.

Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal live. Amen

Have a blessed week,

Fr. Martin