



Forgiveness Sunday
Matthew 6:14-21

*“Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace, do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, says the Lord.”
(Friday reading - Zechariah 8:7-17)*

The question on Friday before lunch was about honesty. How honest can we be with ourselves? Rarely have we heard such diverse answers, touching the same reality with truth. Linda said smiling that she just looks in the mirror and that is enough. Other people said that the more honest you are, the more painful it is. Others agreed and added that as painful as it is, honesty is good. If you reach that depth in the heart, something good happens, a sort of healing. Precisely a type of healing. Ana said that she is honest. With God you cannot be otherwise. She opened her hands and looked up, the same way we do when we “lift up our hearts”. Hector’s answer was completely different. He spoke about honesty as a process. How you have to find a quiet place at night after he walks the streets and stays still. This is the starting point. Then you reflect and ponder from that place of stillness. “That’s how it works, that’s it”.

How can we really be honest and look for the Truth in us? Is there any good that stands against the petrified shame that desensitized the soul? Why would we look if all we get to see and offer today among us is destruction and desolation? Do we really want to find out how it started? Is the honesty of our heart the hurt that we bring to each other? Is this the depth and boundary of our honesty? Today we don’t need to look inside, we could look at each other and at the violence that spreads and destroys what the Lord loves. We hurt the Lord again by harming whom He loves the most. Our secret honesty revealed itself and the world seems ashamed, lost and terrified at what we have been covering all this time. If yesterday we were avoiding the painful truth today we cannot hide from it. But just like in the good old times, with Adam and Eve, blame of one another is more powerful than the care manifested. The reality of violence and death has brought no repentance in us yet.

“The Lord said, “If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (today’s gospel)

We cannot look within ourselves and find honesty. Linda is right, we can only behold the mirror, the icon of Christ. Our sin can be seen only by Him. Our honesty is his relationship with us. We are honest if we accept it. Let Him judge us even if we feel only condemnation from within. Let us trust the face we remember within us. The face of the One who loves us, the face of the One we hurt. The Truth that gives Himself to us. The perfect One to the sinful one.



On Thursday we talked at the mission about hospitality as it is described in the Rule. We learned a new thing from Laura. Hospitality is not only welcoming people within the church but also going out with them when they leave. Accompanying them to the door as they go into the streets. "You know, she said, when they will wander on the streets in distress they will remember the face that accompanies them out of the church." The remembrance of this face for us is the honesty of hope that brings us back.

The gospel today speaks about the need to look within us in Truth. To see the face that touches in us with forgiveness the memory of sin. The church today does not speak in abstract about forgiveness, it speaks reminding us about the trauma in which we all partake, in responsibility and guilt. It reveals the betrayal of God by man. It speaks about it because it knows the face of the One who loves. We remembered the sin with an invitation for forgiveness.

However, as Hector said, there is a process. Jesus tells us that there is no other way to receive forgiveness but by forgiving those who hurt us. Jesus' inflexibility is actually a reminder about the innocence in us. The reality of this innocence is real in us, for if we have to forgive, it means that when we were hurt, we were innocent. Jesus' commandment is the good news for us, forgiving is the restoration of one's innocence from within. There is a process and this is the starting point. By forgiving those who hurt us in our innocence we regain the voice of prayer that God listens to. When we prayed for peace on Wednesday, we discovered in the scripture and in the words of prayer that God speaks only with those who are oppressed. He does not speak to the abuser, He leaves that to us, if we become innocent by claiming forgiveness.

He addresses those who are hurt and abused, the innocent, because the heart of those who bring about abuse, violence and war is turned to evil (Pharaoh's heart - Exodus 9:12). He speaks to them

about a different type of war, in which there is hope for both the martyrs and the oppressors when forgiveness is manifested.

That's why we regain our innocence when we start forgiving those who hurt us. And that gives us a voice to pray for our own forgiveness and to receive the peace within our soul. It is the enemy we have to forgive. God forgives us. We became the enemies for Him through our disobedience and through the violence revealed through the cross of His Son. Adam and Eve had to forgive the enemy because they were innocent when they were tempted. They also had to forgive each other: Eve for being blamed by Adam and Adam for being offered the fruit by Eve.

Today we look and search for the innocence of the church. For the human innocence in it and we cannot find it. To understand what we need to forgive, to recover our innocence, to remember the face we hurt. We need to pray because threatening war and hell for the enemy would not bring about any innocence within the heart of the world. It would bring no peace.

Tonight, Lent starts. We are asked to reclaim our innocence by not leaving anybody unforgiven behind, but to remember only the face Who loved us and we hurt deeply. To remember Him and only Him because there is much love and forgiveness in Christ, our mirror and the icon of man.