

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, February 20, 2022

The Courage to Forgive

Written by Douglas Sousa

**1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9,
12-13, 22-23**

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49
Luke 6:27-38**



It does not take courage to exact revenge; rather, it takes courage to forgive and seek true justice.

[In today's gospel](#), Jesus compels us to fight evil through the power of good. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Our society tends to view evil as strong and goodness as weak. Hollywood films depict the strong woman or man as the one who refuses to forgive and who violently seeks revenge on all who harmed them. However, nothing could be further from the truth. It is easy to hold a grudge. Even children are capable of doing that. On the contrary, it is difficult to forgive. It is hard to love those who want to harm us. Despite what Hollywood tells us, it does not take courage to seek vengeance on someone. Rather, it takes courage to forgive. Only a strong person has the power to forgive, to turn the other cheek, and to choose love over hate.

Forgiveness and love are powerful forces for change in society. Sometimes change can happen through violence. People will sometimes behave differently because they are afraid. However, that type of change is short-lived. Eventually people become resentful of having to live in fear and find ways of striking back. In the end, violence only leads to more violence. The history of the world is rife with many examples of just how futile violence can be.

In contrast, love can bring healing, justice, and peace to our world. Just ask the countless Christian witnesses who have chosen the path of love — Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Saint Pope John Paul II, and Dorothy Day. When we choose to forgive, it unleashes the hope of reconciliation. Our enemies come to understand that we are not a threat to them. We begin to see each other not as competitors but as brothers and sisters. By God's grace, history is full of examples of how forgiveness can change society for the better.

Many of us carry bitterness in our hearts toward someone who has hurt us. We may even dream of the day when we can get revenge on them. It is natural for us to want those who have hurt us to feel for themselves the pain they have inflicted on us. But revenge never gives us satisfaction. It only strengthens the hate and resentment within us. Our inability to forgive only gives those who hurt us more power over us. When we choose to forgive, we set ourselves free from the power of those who have hurt us. For that reason, forgiveness is really the ultimate revenge.

It is up to us, the baptized followers of Jesus, to change the world through the power of forgiveness and love. Jesus himself gives us his example of merciful love that turns an act of unspeakable violence — the cross — into the moment of the world's salvation. That is what we celebrate today — a merciful God who saves us through love. That is the commitment we made at our baptism — to follow Jesus' example until the whole world knows the merciful love of God. To make that happen, we are even willing to love our enemies.

Douglas Sousa

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,
You are kind and merciful.
Make us kind and merciful.
You pardon our iniquities
Give us the courage to forgive those who hurt us.
You heal all our ills.
May we strive to heal others.
You redeem us from destruction.
May we work to redeem this world
Which faces the destructive forces of violence.
May we be compassionate
As You, Lord, are compassionate,
So that the world may see another way
To resolve conflict and division —
The way of love,
The way of the cross.
Amen