

A word from your Pastor

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” (Matthew 18:21)

As we continue our journey through this Lenten season, we find ourselves somewhere between the Cross and the New life of Christ found on Easter morning. We are in the midst of sin and all the while covered with forgiveness. We may feel darkness all around but can clearly see the light of the world ahead. Through our baptism we are promised this light will never leave us and we are asked to share the light of Christ when we are called.

God uses our lives and our experiences, where we live in the middle of chaos heading toward the light, to help others see that Jesus is always here and is always offering forgiveness and mercy to all who see the joyous celebration of Easter.

I recently read about a Pastor, who after a graveside service, was approached by a man who seemed to be rather distant in many ways. The man thanked the Pastor for the service and asked if he could talk for a minute. He wanted to tell the Pastor something that he had shared with only one other person.

He was a World War II veteran who had seen the worst parts of war. He shared a moment where his unit came under attack. “I hit the ground and I was o.k. but I heard another guy screaming. I could tell he was badly hurt as his stomach was ripped open and there was a lot of blood. He kept pleading with me to kill him as he was in severe terrible pain.” Tears swelled up in the veteran’s eyes. “And I did.” He said, “I shot him. I didn’t want to but he kept begging me. He would have died anyway.”

Then there was a quiet pause followed by an intense question. “Do you think God will forgive me?” The Pastor said that he did what he thought was right because he didn’t want the wounded to suffer any longer. The Pastor continued saying, “God knows that. God also knows that you were in a terrible no-win situation. So yes, I believe without a doubt that God will forgive you.”

A few months ago, an active duty soldier came to me and had that same distant kind of look. His tour was now over and now he returned to what he described as American life as usual. However, he found it difficult to live in peace when he knew how many lost lives he may have been responsible for during his tour that affected families from other countries. I asked him what war is about and why it was or is so important that the military mission was accomplished. He knew clearly that peace for many people and countries was at stake but he could not forgive himself.

I assured him that war has always been a part of human history and God has always been present offering his unconditional forgiveness even for the unthinkable moments like war and the death of those whom we are at war.

These experiences give me a new perspective on the amazing words of the risen Jesus in the Gospel of John, when he breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples and says, ***“If you***

forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” The power of Jesus has given me is not literally to forgive the sins of others but

to pronounce God’s forgiveness to them as one of Jesus’ disciples. This is sharing the power of the suffering found through the cross and the joy of new life in Easter.

We all are called to tell the good news of God’s mercy and grace through Christ so others can finally let go of their sins, know peace and live in the light of Christ. AMEN

(Special thanks to Pastor F. Gagnon for his experience.)