

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Aboard St. Peter's Barque with the Catechism Charting Our Course

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Chasing Holiness

Having already looked at the fourth petition ("Give us this day...", Iss. 30), today we spotlight the fifth: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." It is said that one day a rabbi jokingly told God, "So, I guess man has the greater power. Man doesn't need you to sin; but, you need man to forgive!" While we probably wouldn't stand next to this rabbi in an electrical storm, we do laugh along with him because we see the ridiculousness of man implied here. God's love forgives all and wants us to know this gift, while all we're concerned about is who's winning the power struggle. What funny little creatures we are.

Forgiveness is "the *fundamental* condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with their Father and of men with one another." (italics added, CCC 2844) Yet, we seem

concerned only about who's ahead.

Forgiveness is an act of the will. We choose to forgive. Often, it takes awhile for our emotions to catch up to this decision, "It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession." (CCC 2843) Wow.

To help bring emotions into conformity with our choice, one can reflect on Jesus' crown of thorns. As we see in each thorn a person who hurt us or made us bleed, we see not ourselves (who have done the same), but we see Jesus, wholly innocent, who illustrated the "love that loves to the end." (CCC 2843) At some point we must each say, "Enough!" and let the pride, competition, and power struggles go in order to forgive.



SCRIPTURAL SECRETS...

Today, the readings offer more parables with similar themes: the value of the kingdom of God and the warning to leave judgment to God. We saw this latter theme last week in the parable of the weeds: "The refusal of the householder to allow his slaves to separate the wheat from the weeds while they are still growing is a warning to the disciples not to attempt to anticipate the final judgment of God by a definitive exclusion of sinners from the kingdom." (see USCCB Commentary for Mt. 13: 29-30; see website)

Moving on from this warning, we encounter a new focus that forces the question: "What would I give up for the kingdom of God?" Perhaps a more revealing question would be, "What kinds of things are so important to me that I would bury them away?" Aside from the obvious (material possessions), striving for position, respect, power, or glory must also be considered as 'things we treasure.'

As we take stock of what we 'bury,' it is interesting to note whether or not we are really all that different from those in Jesus' day. Perhaps liquidation of the more superficial items in our 'portfolio' is advised so that there is room for treasure of a more lasting nature, that 'pearl of great price.'



SAINTS PRESERVE US!

Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) began his life near the coast of Spain (near France) as the youngest of 13. He grew up, became a soldier, and by many accounts, lived a very self-serving and sin-filled life. But, then he was wounded in battle. While recovering from wounds to his legs (at age 30), he occupied his time reading the lives of the saints. This changed him forever.

He realized that these readings strengthened him, while reading stories of bravery and chivalry (and imagining his own success in these undertakings) left him feeling empty. This made him see that there was a big difference between feeding on thoughts of God and feeding on thoughts of the world.

Leaving the hospital at 31, he had no plans. He lived in a cavern for a while and underwent many spiritual and psychic torments. At this time, he began to write what are known as *The Spiritual Exercises*. These writings outline spiritual practices for lay people. They are meant to help people 'discern spirits' in order to know God's will for them.

Sts. Peter Faber and Francis Xavier were in the group of followers who did not abandon Ignatius. They took vows of poverty and chastity in 1534. Five years later, at 48, after much disagreement among this band of secular priests, they submitted themselves to the Pope for approval as a religious order. Despite resistance from some in Rome, verbal approval was finally given to this new order, the *Society of Jesus*, 3 September 1539.

What's In A Word?

Everybody seems to recognize the Society of Jesus. Many have had experience with its priests and brothers in high schools, universities, and parishes. Many, too, have formed strong feelings about this religious order. Some see the Society of Jesus as a special gift of God to his Church. Others hold an opposite opinion. Naturally, an order tied to the Pope by an oath of allegiance, committed to counter-reformation efforts in Europe, renown for intellectual achievements, and willing to go anywhere in the world to evangelize is bound to have friends and enemies.

To its credit the Society of Jesus has not been lukewarm in its mission. Nor has it lacked the determination to turn things around. A case in point is the word 'Jesuit', used to

describe a member of the Society. In the 15th century the word 'jesuit' referred to anyone who used the name of Jesus too frequently. Who decided this is uncertain. A few years after the founding of the Society of Jesus in 1540, the word Jesuit was used as a reproachful term for the Society. St. Ignatius never used the word. However, later members of the Society did speak of themselves as Jesuits, confident that their Society would prove the word to have a positive connotation.



Dear Fr. Thom,

Do we believe in predestination like many Protestants? Is it already decided whether I'm going to heaven or hell?!!

Stuck in Time

Dear Stuck,

Ohhh, did you pick a hot topic! Every time we talk about God, his grace, and its relationship to our free will, we get into trouble. God knows all and is all powerful. He offers us grace to help us, but preserves our free will at every step.

"To God all moments of time are present in their immediacy." (CCC 600) Here, the catechism holds that God is near to all that happens. While he may 'see,' or know, all that is chosen by an individual, "each person's free response to his grace" (CCC 600) is always upheld. Because God knows what we will choose does not mean that he *willed* it to happen [Just because God knew what would happen to his Son when he dropped him off at our playground doesn't mean he wanted it to happen.] He gives us grace to help us choose the good and is powerful enough to redeem the evil he knew we would put into play.

This introduces a new category: the "allowing" of actions to happen. God is said to even allow the events which "flow from blindness," [as seen with Pontius Pilate (CCC 600)]. So, Jesus' death was "part of the mystery of God's plan..." yet those who "handed him over (were not) merely passive players in a scenario written in advance by God." (CCC 599) Their free wills were fully active. Wow. My head is spinning.

Since we cannot wholly understand time, or how grace works, we lack the words. Without words, we cannot discuss. So difficult has this issue been that it was actually ruled 'off limits' as a topic for discussion by St. Ignatius Loyola among his priests (Rule #15 in *Rules For Thinking*). So heated did the fight on this topic get between the Jesuits and the Dominicans that three Popes had to tell them to stop arguing in public! Pope Clement VIII established a commission to settle this issue; Pope Paul V (1607) actually issued a decree forcing them to stop the bickering! (see website).

Your take-away from all this...? Take a lesson from a saying the catechism attributes to St. Ignatius of Loyola, "Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you." (CCC 2834)

~Fr. Thom



CATECHETICAL CORNER

The readings have been focusing on judgment these last few weeks, specifically on the attention placed on leaving this act for God. Articles 11 and 12 of the Creed deal with 'end issues': "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting..." So, what are the answers to the "reporter's questions" regarding this event?

With regard to the "what" question, the resurrection of the body refers to God's "granting incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls." (CCC 997) This new body will receive life that will not die.

The Church answers the question of "who" will be raised as "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." (CCC 998)

"How" this is to occur is described as an event that can only happen through Jesus Christ when one has lived in him. This transformation of one's body is akin to what happens at Mass in the bread and wine once it is blessed: it "...is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies...are no longer corruptible." (CCC 999-1000)

"When" is believed to be "the last day" and is tied to Christ's coming "at the end of the world." (CCC 1001)

While much of this refers to the Last judgment when Christ returns, it is believed that there is a Particular judgment that occurs "at the very moment of (our) death," when "we shall be judged on our love" and be "rewarded in accordance with (our) works and faith." (CCC 1021-1022)

Somehow, in all of this, God's mercy will be perfected in his justice, and his justice will be perfected in his mercy. How this will look exactly is something we have to wait for.