

## **HOMILY – 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 19 FEBRUARY 2017**

Jesus, in the Gospel today, challenges our darker human instincts that cause so much trouble in the world. What do I mean? Revenge. Getting back or even with those who have deliberately or unconsciously hurt us.

It was reported that when Adolf Hitler was a young man, growing up in Austria, his family were short of money and they sought assistance from the Jewish bankers but were turned down. Once vengeance/hatred takes hold in the heart and mind, it is without limit where it can lead. What about you? What about me? What about each of us? Am I a vengeful person? Do I hold deep grudges towards those who have hurt me in my past life? A grudge is like a clot in the artery, it prevents new life from flowing. Once we make up our minds to hate someone, we only see the bad in them, we analyse their faults, hope they fall under a bus or that we will never see them again, casting them into outer darkness. That we even wish they were dead. What an awful thought, to have someone, in addition to Christ, crucified.

Jesus never hated anyone. He never sought revenge on anyone. Yes, he challenged the Scribes and Pharisees and spoke against their hypocrisy but and this is very important, he went to the cross and died for the sins of all the world. He always desires that those who hate him will experience conversion. That is why he tells the parable of the Prodigal Son, the lost sheep. That's why he calls on Saul to become Paul. That is why he prays for Judas Iscariot. That is why he cries out of Calvary 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'. Love the sinner, doing good to those who hate you is counter intuitive but very, very powerful. It makes the worst bullies and the greatest sadists think. They do not expect to be forgiven. It disarms their desire to be aggressive and violent.

When St Agnes went to her martyrdom, she was calm and resolute. Her executor was shaking all over. He was disempowered in his aggression. It showed the futility of violence. Violence breeds violence. It escalates, becoming like Aleppo, where no one is willing to back down. Total misery and suffering. The destiny God seeks for us all is healing and salvation. It is never God's desire for anyone to experience eternal misery or vengeance. If we end up in a state of hell, it is because we have chosen it for ourselves. Never to wish anything but vengeance, misery and unremitting suffering on other people, whether they have wronged us or not. I believe there is potential good in all people, just as there is potential evil. Only by regular conversion to the Triune God can we rescue our lives and the lives of those we find hard to love from compounded misery. Every time we pray the Our Father, we make that pledge 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and deliver us from evil.

Amen