By Mark Pranaitis, CM

We know the season of life during which we read a story, play, or poem colors, deepens, and enriches our reading. The same is true with scriptures. They sound and feel different in this latter part of the liturgical year when themes of final judgement and the second coming of Jesus loom large. How different this season from the one we were in several months ago when, towards the beginning of the year when we (first) explored and accepted discipleship. Way back then (It really was just a few months ago.) while caught up in that rush of new/renewed faith we might have thought forgiveness of other’s debts to us would be easy. That’s the way it is with young love.

But, having lived through many liturgical years now, I know that the excitement of young faith doesn’t last and the challenge of fully embracing the cross and its demands is hard. One of those demands is forgiveness.

Looked at from the perspective of social justice, forgiveness seems to be cheap. Some people have imposed their will on others making them suffer, sometimes for many years. They should be punished, held to account, made to restore what was taken, not forgiven. Why should those who have lost much, paid the higher price, and suffered the indignity be expected to (invited to) forgive their oppressors? This seems sick and wrong.

Until we admit that we need forgiveness and that God forgives us we’ll be stuck at the level of fairness. Once we realize that even though God has the power to punish but instead extends the hand of friendship and welcomes us back home we can see the attraction of behaving similarly.

May forgiveness bring about healing and justice.

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