

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Sin is selfish. Men seldom sin to the advantage or help of others. Sin is the result of a self-consumed mindset. Jealousy and lust, anger and hatred all put self first to the exclusion of others. So Facebook is full of dream vacations, new jobs, incredible weight loss, new cars, second homes, marathons run, and extravagant purchases. That is how fallen men desire others to see them.

Fallen man is curved in on himself. He is egocentric. And that egocentrism is blinding. Fallen men consider what they think and feel to be normal, indeed normative, and other's differences they see as flaws. And the true flaws in others sinful pride magnifies. Therein lies the blindness. Minimizing your own sinfulness, and magnifying the sins of others, you fail to see clearly.

The Apostle explains it this way: "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was."

Today our Lord's Words teach you to look at yourself differently, honestly, in the reflection of the Holy Law. Our Lord's commands "Be merciful", "Judge not", "Condemn not", "Forgive", and "Give" are all directives on how you are to relate to others. You know what mercy is, for you have desired mercy from others. Criminals plead mercy when they are sentenced. What they mean is that they desire the judge to be lenient in their penalty, or to set them free.

And that is what you have desired from others that you have wronged or harmed. You desire that they minimize your transgressions. But truth be told, that is not true mercy. For by it the transgression is not removed. The same is true for not judging. You have desired that others "put the best construction" on your words and actions.

But at the same time you have imagined sinful motives to lie behind the acts of others. Consider the political divisions in our country, and the things you have thought or said about the "other side". You haven't been merciful. You have been judgmental.

And there are those that you have condemned, writing them off in your mind as unredeemable, or worse, not worthy of your compassion or mercy. So our Lord's command that you forgive you have failed to keep, for every sinner catalogs the transgressions of those around him to make himself seem more pious in his own eyes.

And that, O Fallen Man, is the plank in your eye. That is the egocentric blindness that is self-imposed by being curved in on yourself. And that plank prevents you from seeing others aright. Looking inward, you are blind to others. Your own sinfulness prevents you from showing true mercy, compassion and forgiveness, by which the speck in your brother's eye can truly be removed. So blind, you quickly fall into the ditch, a place of great spiritual harm to yourself.

And were it not for true mercy, God's mercy, that ditch would be eternal condemnation. But what you could not do for others, Christ does for you. "Be merciful", "Judge not", "Condemn not", "Forgive", and "Give" are descriptions of Christ. He was merciful to lepers and harlots and thieves.

He was merciful even to those who showed Him no mercy. He did not judge, but suffered humiliation and death to be judged in your place. He did not condemn, rather being sinless, being without transgression, He allowed Himself to be condemned for you, instead of you, condemned in your place.

He gave freely, He gave His all, He gave His life that your life be spared. And therein lies true forgiveness. For Christ alone brings true forgiveness. Even of those who put Him to death He prayed “Father, forgive them...” And as your Advocate with the Father, that is what He prays for you. That is what He won for you. Giving Himself, truly unselfish and in consuming concern not for Himself but for you, He shed His Blood that you be forgiven.

He is the source of love and forgiveness. And that love He shows you on the cross, the fount and source of your forgiveness. Believing in Him, that forgiveness is yours. Believing in Him, you show that forgiveness to others. In Christ, you see the value of others, of family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and even enemies, in the price that God paid for their souls. For they too are redeemed by the Blood of Christ. He died for you, for them, for all men, for the sins of the world.

The gibbet of His cross is the plank by which the plank in your eye is removed. Forgiven in Christ, baptized into holiness and righteousness, filled with the Spirit of the Living God, you are no longer curved in on yourself. Faith is not egocentric. Faith finds its center in Christ Jesus. And faith finds its expression in extending the love of God shown you to those around you. Faith forgives those who trespass against you, as you daily pray that God would do to you.

In Christ, we see others clearly. We are not blind to their shortcomings and failures. But you see those shortcomings and failures first in yourself. And you know that they are covered by the Blood of Christ. And so you see that same propitiation, that blessed expiation, as covering the transgressions of others. In Christ you do not condemn, you bless. In Christ, you do not judge, you explain everything in the kindest way.

That pleases God. It is a good work. But you do not thereby earn your salvation. It is a consequence, a fruit, of your salvation. So the Apostle writes that sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. The day comes, pray God it come soon, when you will be relieved of your flesh, and be transformed.

Now, St. Paul writes, “we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” In Christ, heaven is open to you now by promise, soon by sight. But that sight is not impeded by plank or speck. For seeing Christ, believing in Christ, you see clearly.

So you who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within yourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of your body. Until that day, the Christ who gave Himself for you gives you His Body as your heavenly Meal. He pours His shed Blood into the Chalice and across your lips.

He bids you partake of the heavenly bounty of the Good Measure of the Holy Eucharist, the Measure of Christ measured back to you, delivering you from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God. For the Lord has put His Name on you, and He will bless you.

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