

PASSION SUNDAY
Year C March 24, 2013

Theme: Astonishing Forgiveness

What sort of man, in excruciating pain as he hung in crucifixion with nails gouging through his hands and feet, could say: **“Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing”?**

What kind of clear centered-ness of being did it require to utter such words?

From what sureness of heart did such generosity of spirit spring?

Only the Gospel of Luke and his Passion account present these stunning words of Jesus from the Cross and they are so characteristic of the forgiving, merciful Jesus reveal throughout that same Gospel.

How often in Luke – despite the fierce criticism of the religious authorities – Jesus ate and drank with the tax collectors and prostitutes and sinners to tell them of God’s welcome and forgiveness.

Just two weeks ago we heard that astonishing parable, again only found in Luke, of the Boundlessly Forgiving Father and his two sons.

Even with such a message of forgiveness, how does a person muster the inner resources to forgive his cruel executioners?

How did he find what it took excuse their actions because they **“did not know what they were doing?”**

Brothers and sisters, Jesus has left us an extraordinary, even heroic example of forgiveness as our model.

How then can we withhold forgiveness for our peeve and upsets toward each other?

If Jesus could pray to his Father that those who had betrayed and denied and arrested him,

...those who had whipped him and crowned him with thorns and spit on him,

...those who had traded him for a murderer named Barabbas, and the one who had condemned him to death,

...did not know what they were doing,

...if Jesus could pray such generous and complete forgiveness,

...how can we so stridently and so tenaciously cling to our grudges, our resentments, our angers and hurts to our fellow men and women?

If Jesus could find it in his heart to forgive those who drove nails into his hands and feet, why is so hard for us to forgive those who have hurt us with their mere words or passing actions?

Jesus' example is indeed extraordinary, but it is the model he left us.

It is also the model on which the Father has placed his seal of approval by raising Christ from the dead.