

## CSA Sunday/Grandparents Day

[Sirach 27:30-28:7, Psalm 103: Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35]

At one of the Presbyteral Convocations up at Boyne, those every other year gatherings of the priests and bishops of the Archdiocese of Detroit, the keynote speaker asked us all: "Do you know what the word 'ruminate' means?" Most of us shook our heads in the negative. He then defined it for us. "It means to go over in the mind repeatedly and often, casually or slowly. It also means to chew repeatedly for an extended period. To chew again what has been chewed slightly and swallowed. To chew the cud."

"In other words," he continued, it's playing in our mind all those negative tapes over and over. The negative tapes of our mistakes, our failures, the people who have wronged us or hurt us. We get sick on chewing that cud. We get indigestion. We get heart aches." Then he hit us with the message: "For the true Christian, there is no room in our lives to ruminate." There is no room to ruminate. It makes us sick and sicker. There is no room to ruminate!

Today's readings offer an uncomfortable, but clear challenge to us: the challenge of forgiveness. The First Reading from the Book of Sirach reminds us to release or turn over to the Lord our anger and desire for vengeance, for it is God's role, not ours, to punish those who have done evil to us. We are not to be vengeful; we are to forgive. "The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail." But as for us, we must forgive: "Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven."

It is important to remember, however, that forgiving another does not mean absolving them of responsibility. To forgive another is to confirm that they have done wrong and are in need of forgiveness. Mercy does not cancel out justice or the need for conversion, but it does open up a path of charity that encourages and promotes conversion and justice. For the Christian in the world, we live in mercy and we long for justice, but we entrust final justice (final

conversion) always to God. As long as we believe in the power and mercy of God, we always hope for this.

I'm reminded of what a friend said to me recently: "I'm not in the revenge business. That's not in my job description. That's in God's job description!"

Note that the reason given for why we should forgive, both in Sirach and in the Psalm, is that none of us are free of sin and guilt. We are all sinners, we have all done wrong. Yet, God forgives us, and so we must forgive others. Today's Responsorial Psalm proclaims that God "has not dealt with us as our sins merit, nor requited us as our deeds deserve." God treats us with forgiveness, love and compassion, and we must do the same. Remember what we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Someone told me, "I no longer say the Our Father because I cannot and will not say the words, "as we forgive those who trespass against us." How sad.

Another person told me the opposite, "I don't have the time and energy to invest in hate and resentment. It takes too much out of me."

In some ways, forgiveness frees the one who forgives from carrying that burden. We can let it go and entrust the other to God, Who is better able to deal with them. The teaching on forgiveness is about being like God, Who is merciful. It is about recognizing something of ourselves in those who commit the greatest evils, for no one is free of sin. Finally, this teaching on forgiveness is about being able to live with the peace of love instead of fear and hate, which tears and destroys. It also cures our heartache – and our indigestion!

Speaking of indigestion, today is CSA Sunday! I say this because most pastors, when they receive their annual letter from the Archbishop with the new CSA parish target, their stomachs twist and turn. But seriously, folks, the Catholic Services Appeal is our chance to participate in the mission of the larger Church of the Archdiocese of Detroit. The theme for this year is "Rise and Be Not Afraid." Because of the current COVID-19 and economic situation in our country, Archbishop Allen Vigneron moved this year's CSA weekend from the first weekend in May to this weekend in September. More importantly, the Archbishop has reduced all 2020 CSA parish targets by 15%.

That means that our new CSA parish target of \$90,708 has been reduced by the Archbishop to \$77,101. The AOD has sent out all CSA information to your homes. Please send in your gift or pledge card directly to them in the envelope provided. Do not send them to the parish. Our parish will be credited with all gifts received by the AOD. This spares us a lot of local preparation and work. Let's "Rise" and "Be Not Afraid" to reach our goal!

Today also is Grandparents Day in our country, another "Hallmark moment! The Sunday in September after Labor Day has been designated to remember and honor our grandparents. Marian McQuade hoped to establish a national day that would honor grandparents, and in 1970 she began a campaign to do so. McQuade raised awareness about senior citizens throughout the 1970s. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter declared the first Sunday after Labor Day to be National Grandparents Day. Each year, the president issues a proclamation to keep the tradition going.

Grandparents Day has both an official flower and song. Both were chosen by the National Grandparents Day Council. The official flower is the forget-me-not. The official song is Johnny Prill's "A Song for Grandma and Grandpa."

Most grandparents want to spend time with their grandchildren. If you have a grandparent, ask them to show you one of their favorite hobbies. Let your grandparents teach you a skill. If your grandparent would prefer a calm day, ask them to show you their favorite classic movie.

If your grandparent does not live nearby, give them a phone call and make them a card! Even if the card doesn't arrive by Grandparents Day, they'll always appreciate a handwritten card which shows your thoughtfulness. It really is the thought that counts -- just make sure your grandparents know that you're thinking of them. All of my grandparents died when I was young, so I asked my parents to tell me stories about their family history. And if YOU are a grandparent, grab a recording device -- and leave for all posterity your favorite stories! AMEN!