

Church of the Divine Love

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

FEBRUARY 20, 2022

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence after the candles are lit

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#657 – Love divine, all loves excelling**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Genesis 45:3-11, 15**

Psalm 37:1-12, 41-42

Second Lesson: **1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50**

Gradual Hymn **#391 – Before the Lord's eternal throne**

Gospel: **Luke 6:27-38**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

Confession of Sin page 360

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#390 – Praise to the Lord**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn – **#674 – Forgive our sins as we forgive**

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn **#473 – Lift high the cross**

Sermon Sunday February 20, 2022

Genesis 45: 3-11, 15; Psalm 37: 1-12, 41-42; 1 Corinthians 15: 35-38,42-50; Luke 6: 27-38

Beloved people of God,

Loving your enemies has always been a radical idea. We see that very plainly in the scene from Genesis. Long before Joseph's brothers had wanted to kill him, for many reasons, some not altogether bad. Joseph was primarily a spoiled brat. He was daddy's favorite. They had to work. Joseph stayed around the house. Joseph, the youngest, the lowest man on the totem pole, wore a special coat, given to him by his father, a coat which daily rubbed the brother's faces in his undeserved and nontraditional top rank.

On top of all of that, Joseph had dreams, dreams which he delighted in retelling, dreams about how the rest of the family, nay, even the rest of the universe, would bow down to him. A day came when it was too much. And so, the brothers wanted to do away with him. But instead of killing him, they sold him into slavery. Joseph ended up in Egypt, and the brothers thought they were done with him.

Joseph's journey was just beginning. Bought by a high official, Joseph worked for him until the day the official's wife tried to seduce Joseph. When he refused to give in, she cried rape, and Joseph was thrown into prison. He was there at least two years before he was brought forth by Pharaoh to interpret some dreams. Because of Joseph's wisdom and discernment, given to him by God, he is suddenly and unexpectedly freed from prison and raised to the second highest office in all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. For seven years, Joseph over-sees a great public works project, which will set aside a portion of each year's harvest, so that when the seven years of famine comes, Egypt will be ready.

Life was good for Joseph, even two years into the famine. But one day, his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain. He recognized them but they did not recognize him. What would he do? Certainly, he

instantly remembered all that they did to him, all of the suffering he endured and so long. No doubt he had certain feelings about all of that. Now, they were completely within his control. He could do what he wanted with them. He could exact revenge for so many years of suffering, all of it unjust suffering. What would he do? What would you do? What Joseph did was toy with them for a time. He made their lives chaotic and traumatic. First, he held one of them as a hostage, until they returned with their youngest brother. He played mind games with them by placing their money in their sacks of grain, causing them to wonder. Then, when they did return, he accused them of being spies, and threatened to keep the youngest brother. They were terrified, and rightly so. They were at his mercy.

This is where we join the story today. Did Joseph love his enemies? Yes, he did, and the reality is simply amazing. The brothers, realizing who he was, and realizing that he intended to do them no harm at all, were dazed. They didn't know what to do. They couldn't believe it. So, Joseph called them close and embraced them. Thoughts and fears of revenge were broken, as a family once torn apart is restored with joy. Love your enemies, Jesus said. Do good to those who hate you. These words are as radical now as they were then. How can a sensible person love someone who hurts them? How can we love someone who gossips about us, who cheats us, who uses us or coldly ignores us? How can we love an enemy when everything we feel inside about that person makes us want to hurt them as they have hurt us?

Oh, we perhaps can talk about love once the playing field is leveled, once we have exacted our sweet revenge. We might talk about love when the scales of justice are in balance once again. But love our enemies before revenge? Love our enemies without the expectation for revenge? Love someone without any thought of getting even. That is what Jesus is talking about here. And the reason is simple: revenge doesn't work. The scales of justice can never be exactly balanced. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, when people were calling for revenge after his house was burned down, "When you live by the rule 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', you end up with a nation of blind and toothless people." So, Jesus tells us to love our enemies. Do good to those who hate us.

But how in the world do we do that? How do you love someone for whom you feel no love? Before doing the countercultural, the counterintuitive act of loving an enemy, you have to do something else that is countercultural: you have to recognize that love has little to do with feelings. Our culture is one that believes everything is based on feelings. That is a lie. Love does not depend on how we feel. Love is known in action. Love is a verb. Jesus makes that perfectly clear. He tells us what love does. Love blesses rather than curses. It is merciful as God is merciful. It forgives as God forgives, without any expectation of reward or vengeance. And then Jesus says, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." It is the great rule of love, the great rule by which you can tell if you are loving someone even when you don't feel like it.

So how can we love someone who is unlovable? We must first resist the temptation of our culture and stop believing its lie that love is only a feeling. Feelings can be unreliable. Then we must act. The proof, the evidence of our love is known in the way that we behave toward one another. "Do to others as you would have them do to you." That is the great rule of love; it is a rule that begins with DO. The spiritual promise that comes with obedience to the rule is this: the judgment you give, is the judgment you will receive; what you sow you will reap. Give and it will be given to you – a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be given to you."

It is a promise rooted in relationships. We don't forgive because we are altruistic. We don't bless because we are such good people. We forgive because we know we need forgiveness. We bless because we know we need blessings. We show mercy because we know we would be lost unless abundant mercy had been and is shown to us. We do to others as we want them to do to us because there is no other way to break the cycle of evil. Love is the only act that can overcome hate. Blessing is the only act that can overcome cursing. Forgiveness is the only act that can ultimately right a wrong.

Joseph seemed to know this long ago. He forgave, he blessed, he loved. But Genesis would not have us hold Joseph up as a hero. He would not wish to be so known. For what he says, what the story tells us, is that God had been at work in all that happened, from the first betrayal of Joseph to the healing of the breach at the end. God is the one who was acting. Joseph was obedient. And in his behavior, Joseph is God-like. He is a symbol of God. For he was rejected by his own people. He was treated and suffered unjustly. Nevertheless, God forgave. God blessed. God loved.

When we obey, when we trust God's way with us, we, too, become signs of the kingdom. We become God-like. We become Christian, Christ-like. Sometimes it feels good. Sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes loving, forgiving, and blessing hurts. But there is no other way. Love is the way. And so, we love, not because we want to do others a favor. We love because we have been loved. We love because we have been transformed. For that good news, Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

SUNDAY – 7 EPIPHANY	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
MONDAY	8:00 AM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:00 PM	AA MEETING	
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
SUNDAY – LAST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY			
	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing. Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles them. Especially we remember before you:

Girard Bishop	Harriet Capers	Bob Curley
Celeste	Arlene Goodenough	Dorothy
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Grace Schinella
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Robert Sweat
Martinisi Family	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Sylvia
Mo	Bill Conklin Sr.	Laura
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Taylor
Ciara	Gabriel	Aidan
Elodie	Del	Julia
People of Haiti	Chrissy Neville	Tim
Theresa K.	Amy E.	
Nathan Treadwell	Christopher & Family	
Victims of Natural Disasters		

Help us to speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

