



BLD WASHINGTON
BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS
COVENANT COMMUNITY

SERVING THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA

Counsel

FORGIVENESS

Theme: We have the heart and character of Christ when we forgive unconditionally.

Word: Ex 32:7-11, 13-14; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19; 1 Tim 1:12-17; Lk 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

Order: *“Rejoice for what has been lost is now found.”* (Luke 15:32)

(BLD Global Community reflection for September 2010)

REFLECTION:

The theme as discerned by our community leaders for this Sunday’s gospel, 24th Sunday in ordinary times, is Forgiveness. We have the heart and character of Christ when we forgive unconditionally. In the first reading, Moses pleads with the Lord not to destroy the people of Israel even though they had abandoned him in favor of a golden calf. Exodus 32:14 says “So the Lord relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people”. Forgiveness. The second reading shows Saint Paul telling Timothy of all his failings such as a blasphemer, persecutor and being arrogant yet, despite all of these faults, Saint Paul says “Indeed, the grace of our Lord has been abundant, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”. Forgiveness. The Sunday gospel is a three part parable all centered

on the message of forgiveness. The first is the Parable of the Lost Sheep. When this one sheep gets lost, the shepherd goes out of his way to look for him and upon finding him, instead of scolding the wayward sheep or maybe calling him a black sheep, the shepherd instead celebrates his being found. Forgiveness. The Parable of the Lost Coin. After losing the coin, instead of just forgetting this one coin, anyway she has nine more, the woman carefully searches for this one coin and when she finds it, instead of putting it aside as some kind of bad luck coin, she rejoices. Forgiveness. The best known of the parables is that of the Prodigal Son. We all can clearly remember and relate to the prodigal son who asked for his inheritance then left his father, squandered his money away, went broke and hungry and returns to his father to ask for forgiveness. The greatest lesson of the parable is on the forgiving heart of the father who even from a distance, not knowing if maybe his wayward son was coming back just to ask for more money, the father was filled with compassion and welcomed the son home with a celebration. Forgiveness. The forgiving did not end there. The father again showed his forgiving heart when he forgave his other arrogant and self-righteous son who resented the celebration given for his just returned wayward brother.

Everyday of our life, the Lord calls us to love God and to love our neighbor, the very basic commandment of our faith. Since some of our neighbors maybe challenging to love, then we have to take the first step of loving, and that is forgiving. Giving forgiveness is much easier

when we have the humbleness and humility of heart just as we are called by Christ in Mt. 11:29 to “learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart.” The giving of forgiveness is also made much easier when we give up our greatest possession and the source of great sin, pride. Just remember the story of Jesus washing of the feet of his twelve apostles in John 13:1-20. When Jesus washed the feet of the twelve apostles, he also washed the feet of Judas Iscariot, whom he knew would later on betray him. Jesus also washed the feet of Simon Peter, whom he knew would later on deny him three times. By washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus the Christ, showed the greatest of humility. By not skipping to wash the feet of these Judas and Peter, Jesus had forgiven the two apostles even before they committed their sins. The Lord did not conveniently pick or choose whom he wanted to forgive. He forgave all and he forgave always. We are called to do the same, forgive always.

But how often should I be forgiving? The same question was asked by Peter of the Lord in Matthew 18:21-22 and here is the Lord’s answer. “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times”. If we have a heart of forgiveness, we harvest smiles, we harvest peace, we harvest joy and we harvest love all around us. One of the most common stories of transformation that I heard from our ME classmates was the change in their driving habits. The same thing happened to me. Instead of cursing and swearing when another driver made a mistake, I am now able to forgive the other driver and just let him pass. I can still see the thankful smile of the other driver as I waved him through the intersection.

How can we forget the story in John 8:1-11 of Mary Magdalene about to be stoned to death because she was caught in the act of adultery? After everyone left the scene when Jesus asked the people “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her”, Mary Magdalene approached Jesus. Mary Magdalene asked if Jesus would also condemn her and Jesus replied “neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on do not sin any more”. The

Lord forgave Mary Magdalene promptly, right there and then. We are called to do the same, forgive promptly.

The days when we believed in the saying “An Eye for an Eye” or “Payback Time” or “Vengeance is Mine” should forever be banished from our minds and our hearts. We have all seen or experienced the ravages of unforgiveness. Wars have been started, thousands or even millions of lives lost in these wars of attrition just because of unforgiveness. Whole tribes or races have been wiped out because of genocide whose root cause is unforgiveness. In our very own families, many have long lingering family feuds. We have family members, relatives or friends not talking to each other for years, many even until death. We have seen or experienced lives ruin when actions were taken during fits of rage or moments of unbridled anger. We have seen small misunderstandings, sometimes caused by wrong interpretations or as little as a painful word uttered, that have been allowed to snow ball when all of these could have been avoided had someone stepped forward and said “I am sorry” and a response of “You are forgiven” would have resolved and restored the peace. We should always remember as we have been told in Ephesians 4:32 “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God also in Christ forgave you.”

How does this apply in our community? Part of our BLD vision states “We are a community of families and a community of persons, called together as one people through a moment of encounter and a process of renewal, to a relationship of faith, hope and love with God. Part of our BLD mission states “Liberate the family from the forces that work against life, love and unity.” We are called to love one another and forgive one another just as the Lord loves and forgives us. As a community that constantly praises and worships together, forgiveness among our brothers and sisters in community takes on an even more special meaning as we are admonished by Christ Jesus in Matthew 5:23 “therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, go first and be

reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift.”

And what if we are unwilling to give forgiveness, the Lord has this warning to us in Matthew 6:14-15 “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

If we still believe that we have a valid reason to withhold forgiveness to someone for a perceived wrong done to us, try imaging the passion of Christ. In his final act of forgiveness, after he was painfully scourged at the pillar, made to carry the heavy cross up Mount Calvary and finally nailed to the cross, after all these was done to Jesus for something that he did not do, to be more precise, for the sins that we committed, Jesus calls out to his Father “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”.

Father God, heal me of my unforgiveness. Take the hardness from my heart and remove pride from my mind, that I may always see the goodness of Christ in another person. Allow me to be quick to forgive and be very very slow to anger. Father God, teach me how to practice what you taught me in the prayer of the Our Father “and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Amen.

Directions:

1. Support Stewardship Committee’s project on reaching out to our inactive BLD members.
2. Be patient, be quick to forgive and be reconciled with each other.
3. Receive the sacrament of healing and reconciliation.

God’s Promise for the week

“I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.” (Ex 32:13)



***A Spirit-Filled Community Day of
Recollection – August 21, 2010
Healing in the Renewal through Our Father’s Love***

Over 100 BLD Washington members attended this year’s Community Day of Recollection presided by Father Brendan Williams of St. Veronica Parish in New Jersey. Our own Spiritual Director, Father Francis Alves warmly welcomed our guest priest, and along with our community leaders joined the congregation in praying and reflecting on the talks of the day. Also present were Richard and Lee dela Fuente as well as Rene and Sally Castaneda who drove Father Williams to and from the recollection.

While most of us are accustomed to following a pre-determined rhythm within our seminars, encounters, and praise and worship in the community; this year’s Community Day of Recollection was a test in the community’s readiness and openness in following the bidding of

the Holy Spirit. Father Williams did not reveal the theme of the recollection until his opening prayer, which allowed the participants to empty themselves of expectations and be completely attuned to the Holy Spirit's leading. Everyone had to heighten their senses to listen for the prompting in songs and internalize the prayers and talks of Father Williams. In a sense, a surrendering to the Holy Spirit was required to fully participate and appreciate the outpouring of messages God had in store for the community. Father Williams' opening prayer implored the Holy Spirit to "give us the docility of the Holy Mother that we may be teachable, moldable, and changeable." Thereafter, it was undeniable that God was working his way into every person's mind and heart.

Father Williams took us on a journey that gently prodded us to look into the hurts and unforgiveness in our hearts from our childhood to the present day. He explained that forgiveness is FOR US. We need to forgive to be freed from the chains of bondage in order to genuinely live in the covenant love of God the Father. Father Williams instructed, that it is not enough for one to simply say sorry, rather, it is necessary to ask for forgiveness. Moreover, Father Williams stressed that, "conversion to Jesus means a conversion to the Church". For this reason, it is imperative that we accept all the teachings of the church. Later, Father Williams shared his experience as a new pastor coming into a divided parish. He gently pointed out that a misguided perception of roles and the desire to be a leader is usually the cause of differences in the community. He then challenged the community to discover and recognize our adoption in Christ. He further urged us to practice Faith Imagination – to make scripture and messages from God an event of the heart and not just the mind. The scripture put before us was – *Romans 8:14-15* "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, through which we cry, Abba, Father ". As we plant this scripture in our hearts, we are reminded that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Hence by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, it is in our nature to forgive and ask for forgiveness.

Through God's love, we can achieve gentleness in our relationships with each other.

The Community Day of Prayer was culminated with a deep communal prayer for healing, a laying of hands, and the celebration of Holy Mass. Some individuals came forward to testify to the amazing surge of love and forgiveness God opened their eyes to during the recollection. The Holy Spirit was evidently moving within everyone present in the recollection. Once again, God claimed his victory over darkness as he enflamed the hearts of the community members.

Prayer for Healing and Renewal in God's Love

Father, we ask you today to draw near to us. Let our days be filled with love for you as we mindfully act with gentleness towards our families, friends, co-workers, and brothers and sisters in community. May we be inspired by the "little way" of St. Therese of Liseux, to practice random act of kindness to people who may have hurt us or been indifferent, and offer them up to you. May we be child-like in accepting your abundant gifts and following your commands. May we be open to the call of the Holy Spirit and allow your healing love and forgiveness radiate from us. Abba, Father, come to our aid! Renew us. Hold us by the hand and show us the way to your everlasting love!

Message from our Spiritual Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the name of the Lord be praised forever!

The Lord says in Mt 11:28: "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Indeed the Lord is always true to his words and fulfills his promises to us. The Day of Recollection led by Fr. Brendan Williams was truly a blessing. Fr. Williams helped us to recognize how wonderful the Lord is and how the Lord wants us to be free from our burdens, individual and communitarian; how the Lord continues His work of

anointing us in the Holy Spirit; and how the Lord meets us where we are but never leaves us there.

All of us who participated in this recollection came out filled with profound gratitude to God for this tremendous experience of His goodness, mercy and compassion in Jesus. Our hearts are also deeply grateful to Fr. Brendan Williams for such a Spirit-filled day of prayer and reflection, and to our elders, Richard & Lee de la Fuente and Rene & Sally Castaneda for their unwavering support and commitment to walk with us on our spiritual journey as a community. I thank Max and Nadine Jalandoni for reserving the venue at St. Raphael's for our use. A word to thanks goes to the DCS for making sure everything went off smoothly, especially with regard to the arrangements for food. (By the way many remarked, including Fr. Williams, that the Lunch was very delicious). I would also like to thank the Praise Ministry for the music, and the Technical Ministry for taking care of our "sound and light" needs. All those who helped behind the scenes, those who lent a hand to set up the chairs and tables, and those who did the clean-up. Thank you too. Lastly, I would like to thank each of you who made it a point to be present inspite of other possible engagements/plans and participated in this Day of Recollection. Thank you for giving us the joy of praying with each other on this special day.

May the Lord continue to work in us and bring us even closer to Him and to one another!

Fr. Francis Alves

Love Offering:

Aug 06, 2010 \$ 785.25
Aug. 13, 2010 \$ 884.41
Aug. 20, 2010 \$ 888.00
Aug. 27, 2010 \$ 890.00

Thank you for your generosity!

September Calendar:

September 03 - First Friday Mass
September 10 - Praise & Worship
September 17 - Praise & Worship
September 24 - Praise & Worship

Community Calendar:

September 24-26
Solo Parent Encounter #3
Holy Family Seminary
Silver Spring, MD
November 12-14
Marriage Encounter #11
Dulles Hilton, VA

Please check our website www.bldwashington.com for 2010 Schedule of Events.

Teaching Schedule:

September 10
LESSONS IN FILMS: Up (rated PG)
For Mark 10 children
Friday, 8:30 PM - 10:30 PM
Our Lady of Victory

September 25
BASIC BIBLE STUDY:
For LSS10 & older classes
Saturday, 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM, VENUE TBD
Pls. bring your RSV or NAB Bibles

September 26
TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST
DVD: D2, Ep 3-4
For Covenanted members
Sunday, 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM, VENUE TBD
Pls. come lunch-fed and bring your Bibles & CCC.

September 26
GIFTS & FRUITS OF THE HOLYSPIRIT:
For LSS9 & older classes
Sunday, 12 NN - 4 PM, VENUE TBD
Pls. come lunch-fed and bring your Bibles & CCC.