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5 MARCH (Mt 18,21-35)**

Ours are a faith and religion of forgiveness. However, they are a very distinct, singular and unique religion and faith of forgiveness. It is not the offender that asks for forgiveness to the offended, it is instead the offended that gives his life for the offender and invites him to let himself be reconciled with Him. This is the great mystery of God's love. St Paul had understood this mystery very well, and so he proclaims and reveals it to the Corinthians.

For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: "In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2Cor 5,14-6.2)

Another essential, vital and substantial truth of our faith and religion is the mystery that surrounds every disciple of Jesus. Every Christian is a chosen instrument of the Father. The Father makes of him a victim of expiation so that in Christ, with Christ and through Christ all the sins of his brothers are deleted. What takes place in Christ Jesus, who was made by God a sacrifice for sin, must be accomplished in every one of his disciples, he also made by the Father a sacrifice for the sin of the world. The Christian is asked to consecrate and offer his life to God for the salvation of every other man.

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

The Christian, in this view of salvation, not the one who forgives forever and ever, he is also above all the one who offers his life to the Father for the conversion and the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world. If he is this victim of expiation of the sins of the whole world, his non forgiveness would

become very incomprehensible. No one must ask for forgiveness to the Christian. He has already forgiven. He has already offered himself for the redemption of his enemies, persecutors, slanderers, denigrators and traitors. Thinking of a Christian that does not forgive is the absurdity of the absurd. It is as if the sun were without rays and without heat.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us victims for the sin.