
21 TUESDAY

Tuesday, 3rd Week in Lent

Daniel 3: 25, 34-43

Ps 24: 4-9

Matt. 18: 21-35

Today's gospel is a dramatic little story about the nature of forgiveness. Jesus told it in answer to a question by Peter, who wanted to know how often he was obliged to forgive someone. Hearing the question and the story again in this time of Lent maybe has an added bitter-sweetness. For we'll be reflecting on Peter's own behaviour during Christ's passion, and then in Eastertime we'll be hearing the conversation between Peter and the Risen Lord at the lakeside in Galilee. Peter learnt in his own experience what it means to need forgiveness for having betrayed love, and to receive unlimited forgiveness for what he'd done. One of the most poignant scenes in the gospel is when Jesus in His passion turned to look at Peter who'd just denied knowing Him, and Peter went out "and wept bitterly". In the scene by the lake, Peter received more than forgiveness, for the One he had betrayed gave him an even greater trust than before. God's forgiveness is far beyond our imagining, yet we wonder about how much we're "obliged" to forgive others. The question would not arise if we really could appreciate the depth and completeness of God's forgiveness of us, in response to our asking for His forgiveness. And perhaps that is the key: if we don't appreciate our own need to be forgiven, we won't be asking so intensely nor receiving so deeply. As for forgiving others, it is easier to do if we ourselves first appreciate how much we've been forgiven, and also if the person who's hurt or offended us actually does sincerely ask us to forgive them. "Forgive us..... as we forgive those who.... "

Text wordcount: 280