

## **Homily For Saturday of the 28th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - October 19, 2019**

**Romans 4:13,16-18** "God is the father of all of us ... who gives life to the dead and calls into existence."

**Psalms 105:** "The Lord remembers his covenant forever, his holy promise."

**Luke 12:8-12** "Do not worry about how you are to defend yourself, for the Holy Spirit will teach you."

### **The Unforgiveable Sin**

#### **Introduction**

So many terrible ideas came out of the 1960's rebellion against authority. It fooled us because it came attached to such exciting entertainment, especially in popular music. The rock group, The Who, expressed one aspect of that rebellion in their line: "I don't need to be forgiven." This idea, this belief, is in now in our language, in our minds and in our hearts, as a culture.

"I don't need to be forgiven." This denial of sin is a betrayal of who we are and the fact that we are made for relationship, with one another and with God, and that does not happen without acknowledgment of sin and the need for forgiveness.

#### **Luke**

It's not a new issue, of course. Jesus spoke about it all the time. Jesus affirmed that loving relationship involves reconciliation. Jesus warned of the consequences of a lack of forgiveness. It is nothing short of disastrous for an individual or a society.

This is the great idolatry that confronts me every day. Will I trust in my own limited capacity to achieve the meaning and purpose of life. Will I be "the master of my own fate," as the poem goes? Will I be "the captain of my own soul?" This may be the theme of a very popular movie, but it is a terrifying idea. Why else would a profound anxiety be the disease of our time, the dis-ease of our time?

But our faith is centred on the one who IS forgiveness, Jesus himself. Jesus said: "everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also

acknowledge before the angels of God; but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. This being denied before the angels is not a punishment for not believing in Jesus. It is a choice that we make, the direct consequence of deliberately placing God outside of our lives.

## **Psalm**

Faith in Jesus Christ is faith in a promise. But not just any promise. The psalmist calls it a "holy promise." Now a holy promise is called a covenant. A covenant is not a contract, where I give only my signature on a piece of paper, agreeing to certain terms for the mutual benefit of two parties. A covenant involves the whole person who makes the promise.

Now when God makes a holy promise, it is permanent. "The Lord remembers his covenant forever," the psalmist says. Emphasizing the point, God remembers his covenant for a thousand generations. It is everlasting. It applies to all times and places.

There was a play in Shakespeare's time. In it, a doctor with many natural gifts feels like he is not getting the admiration he deserves. He makes the classic deal with the devil. He signs away his soul, with his blood, in exchange for 20 years of fame and fortune. During that time, he is wined and dined by royalty throughout Europe. As his time comes to an end, he realizes that he has really gotten almost nothing of value to compare with his eternal soul, so he sinks into despair while waiting for the devil to come and claim him.

Why this play made an impact on me is that it contradicts the conventional thinking that a deal made with the devil has no way out. An angel comes to the doctor just before his death, telling him that, even now, God's mercy is available to him if he will only turn and accept it. For a moment, the doctor is hopeful. He smiles and asks: "Really, even after what I have done?" The angel assures him it is true. It is clear that the doctor believes him, but he can't make himself accept forgiveness and mercy, turns away from God's angel, and thus assures his eternal damnation.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly answers the question that is asked about this question: What is the sin against the Holy Spirit that cannot be forgiven? "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit; never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin. There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.

It is we who condemn ourselves by not trusting in the promise. And, while we are never outside the promise, we have the freedom to reject it. And the ultimate and indelible sign of the promise is Jesus himself. Today, we will respond to God's faithful promise, signed with the blood of Jesus Christ. Today we will be asked again, "will you accept my invitation to mercy and forgiveness and, in turn, offer it to all you meet?" The promise is God's. The choice is ours.