

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Homily

Thom Trunzo

The readings today point to judgement and, in particular, the mercy that is its extension. Psalm 86 says, *Lord, you are good and forgiving.* The first reading from Wisdom states, *But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us.* Then in Matthew's Gospel, we hear a parable of judgement using the image of wheat being harvested while weeds being separated and destroyed.

[Listen to this psalm that speaks of God's kindness and mercy, written by David Haas.](#)

While I was contemplating this message, what kept coming to mind besides the psalm that you just heard, was Shakespeare's words about mercy spoken by Portia, directed toward Shylock in the "Merchant of Venice." (Excerpts follow)

*The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven, upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that receives.... It is an attribute to God himself. We all do pray for mercy, and that same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy...*

When considering these readings, the psalm for today and the one you just heard sung, along with Shakespeare's writings, I am left humbled, actually. Mercy is not generally a human quality easily obtained or practiced, for that matter. It is a Godly act when one forgives unconditionally. It is God who is always seeking us out to reconcile. But it is our humanity that, if we forgive at all, generally sets conditions, as we remember the event and bring it forward should he who we forgave once should happen to sin again. In so many arguments we hear words like, "The last time you said you wouldn't do that again..." or "Why should I believe you this time? You never keep your promise..." These and similar phrases demonstrate that the past is not really the past! Our forgiveness has limitations or conditions attached to it. "I'll forgive you THIS time, but if you ever do that again..."

I have heard people say, "Forgive, YES, but forget, NEVER." These are all examples of conditional mercy. Yet when we seek God's mercy, we expect it to be UNCONDITIONAL.

And unlike God who is in constant pursuit of us so that we can be forgiven and ultimately reconciled, rarely do we, the ones who are hurt or abused, seek out that person for the sole purpose of extending mercy. The more likely scenario is to sit back and wait for them to come to us begging for forgiveness.

It's easy to see why Portia's speech is so powerful! It is a picture of humanity being given the opportunity to possess the power to bring forth lasting and divine peace and reconciliation. *It is an attribute to God himself.* Further, *It is twice blessed. It blesseth him that gives and him that receives.*

If nothing else, this should inspire us to be merciful, since there is a blessing of inner peace that falls upon the giver of mercy as well as falling upon the one seeking to be forgiven. But we are slow learners! For while we want that inner blessing, we generally seek it on OUR TERMS, and that simply never leads to peace!

So let us today, make one step forward into the mystery of mercy, allowing the love of God spoken to us today in all of our scripture passages, *Lord, you are good and forgiving... you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us, you are kind and merciful, slow to anger, rich in kindness* to permeate our beings so that we might live, as Shakespeare says, *in an attribute to God himself* and so be taught to *render the deeds of mercy.*