

Mercy: The healing power of mercy cannot be underestimated. Pope Francis has enjoined us in this way: *"Having received mercy, let us now become merciful,"*. The poem 'PRISONER' (below) attempts to capture these themes. There is no self-pity in the prisoner. He has done wrong and knows he must make reparation to society. He seeks forgiveness but also asks for forgiveness for the mob who abuse him. He draws the important distinction between justified condemnation of evil deeds and unjustified condemnation of a person as being evil. One person showed him mercy and it is that person who has brought him back to Christ.

– Stephen S

As I leave court in this police van,
Forgive the hurt which I have caused,
Forgive my grave wrongs which now deserve
Denunciation and imprisonment.
Forgive the mob who hurl abuse,
Bang the doors and threaten me;
Who reprisals and revenge misjudge →

For reparation, justice and redress.
Forgive the police who, to the press,
Condemn me as evil, not my crimes.
Beam in eye, each casts his stone.
Bless the one kind victim who forgave,
Pardoned me and mercy showed,
And so, Lord, brought me back to You.

Entrance antiphon: The Lord said: I think thoughts of peace and not of affliction. You will call upon me, and I will answer you, and I will lead back your captives from every place.

First Reading: Malachi 3:19-20

Psalms 97: Response: The Lord comes to rule the peoples with fairness.

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to stand with confidence before the Son of Man. Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 21: 5-19

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: To be near God is my happiness, to place my hope in God the Lord.



Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle C, 2022 Weekly Reflection

Some afterthoughts on, and a poem for, Prisoners' Sunday: 9th October 2022

Prisoners' Sunday is the day when the Catholic Church prays for, and with, prisoners and their families. This is a reflection on some themes which arise in this context. Contrition: As defined by the Council of Trent, Contrition is *"sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again."* Expiation: Absolution in confession takes away sin but does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by making amends for the sin: he must "make satisfaction for" or "expiate" his sins. (Catechism of the Catholic Church – CCC- §1459) Forgiveness: The CCC (§ 2840-2845) deals with forgiveness in relation to the words in the Lord's Prayer *"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."* It emphasises that Christian prayer extends to forgiveness of enemies, that forgiveness is a high-point of Christian prayer and that it also bears witness that, in our world, love is stronger than sin. Forgiveness is the fundamental condition of the reconciliation of the children of God with the Father and of men with one another.

Judging: The CCC states (§2302): *'it is praiseworthy to impose restitution "to correct vices and maintain justice."* Nevertheless, only God can judge a person's soul. We are regularly instructed in this by the Gospels. In Matthew Chapter 7 it says: *"Judge not, that you may not be judged... And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye?"* Perhaps even more poignant is the passage in St John when Jesus meets the woman who has committed adultery. He says to those condemning her: *"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."*...When they slink away, Jesus asks the woman if nobody has condemned her; she replies that no-one has. Jesus responds: *"Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."*