

PRODIGALS AND CHRIST by Daniel A. Lord, S.J.

A Study of God's Gentle Forgiveness

Not in Their Vocabulary

Even among the Jews the merciful God was rapidly being forgotten. Stern-hearted themselves and vindictive toward their enemies they preferred their God to be merciless.

Mercy and pity and forgiveness were words quite foreign to the vocabulary of the Pharisees of those days. Slight sins were punished with the guilty man's ostracism from society—he had picked up a bit of wood on the Sabbath or failed ceremoniously to wash his hands before eating.

The Pharisee in the parable who passed, head in air, the man fallen among thieves was quite typical of this breed of ruthless "holy men" who blocked with a merciless code the road of penitence to straying sinners and with their feet pushed back into the gutter the fallen woman struggling to rise. For lepers there was the hopeless city of tombs; for the convicted sinner there was a life of complete social outlawry.

In all this the Pharisees plainly forgot the merciful God of their fathers, who had brooded like a mother over His people.

"Shall a mother forget the child of her womb? Yet shall I not forget thee, O Israel." Out of the story of Jewish sins and God's forgiveness they might have written once more the saga of God's mercy; but they preferred to remember the thunders of Sinai, the serpents in the desert, the lightning falling as a warning to proud, stubborn rebels. If the God of Israel was sometimes fearfully stern, it was with the sternness of a father who has lavished gentleness on his children and finds them shamelessly ungrateful and contemptuous.

For if God was ever patiently forgiving, it was with His errant people. He brought them safely through perils and then saw them offering their thanks to gods who were devils. He made them His chosen race only to find they chose Astarte and Baal. He taught them a pure and holy law, and they preferred the worship of gods whose rites were the murder of babies and whose liturgy was the most perverted forms of lust. When He sent them a prophet, they stoned him. Beside His very temple they planted the dark, mysterious, unhallowed groves of sin.

A Father's Heart

In spite of all this He forgave and forgave, punished and restored to favor, met betrayal of His law with fresh promises of a Savior, and after each truancy took back His broken, frightened, fickle people to His father's heart.

Quite true, and all deliberately forgotten by the Jews, who listened to Christ's story of God's mercy toward sinners as if it were something never heard on earth before. In a very real sense the story had never been heard half so clearly nor told one-tenth as beautifully. Better still, before their astonished eyes, this man who claimed to be the pure and holy Son of God lived out the story of mercy which He preached, was gentle to the fallen, forgiving to the penitent, eager to search for the wandering sinner. Men despairful in the grasp of sin looked up into the face of this God made man and saw the merciful eyes of a Savior.

We may almost say that Christ wrote a first-chapter heading to this story of God's mercy toward sinners when He said "Our Father."

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

Fr. Martin Skierka

2200 Smelter Avenue

Black Eagle, Montana 59414

2nd Sunday of Advent

December 4, 2011

8:00 a.m. Confessions

9:00 a.m. Mass

452-9021 – Church Phone

Mass Schedule

SUNDAY: November 4th - 2nd Sunday of Advent (sd)
†Diane Tesch..... 9:00 a.m. Mass
MONDAY: November 5th - Ferial Day
†Diane Tesch..... No Mass
TUESDAY: December 6th - St. Nicholas, BpC (sd)
†Diane Tesch..... 8:00 a.m. Mass
WEDNESDAY: December 7th - St. Ambrose, BpCD (d)
†Diane Tesch..... 8:00 a.m. Mass
THURSDAY: December 8th -Immaculate Conception of Our Lady
†Diane Tesch..... 9:00 a.m. Mass
FRIDAY: December 9th - Within the Octave of the Immaculate Conception (sd)
†Diane Tesch..... No Mass
SATURDAY: December 10th -Within the Octave (sd)
†Diane Tesch..... 9:00 a.m. Mass
SUNDAY: December 11th - 3rd Sunday of Advent (sd)
†Diane Tesch..... 9:00 a.m. Mass

The Sanctuary Lamp is burning for the repose of the soul of Ruth Vandenberg

Confession Schedule

Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 8:50 a.m.
Saturday: 8:30 a.m. - 8:50 a.m.
Sunday: 8:00 a.m. - 8:50 a.m.

Church Cleaning Schedule for the week of

December 4th Bomgardner Family & Ruth Evans
December 11th General Cleaning for Christmas

Lunch Room Schedule

December 4th Parish Breakfast
December 11th Potluck
December 18th Bake Sale

Altar Boy Serving Schedule

December 4th MC: Jerome Skierka
Th: Anthony Lightner
AC: Brady Bomgardner & John Anthony Friede
TB: Emory Faber& Brook Bomgardner
Dominic Rollins & Nathan Rollins
CB: Matthew Skierka
December 8th MC: Paul Skierka
Th: Brady Bomgardner
AC: Jerome Skierka & Bailey Bomgardner
TB: Anthony Lightner & Anthony Kern
Matthew Skierka & Gregory Skierka
CB: John Anthony Friede
December 11th Gregory Skierka & Brenden Rollins

Announcements

Annual Bake Sale: We will be having a bake sale on December 18th, please see Penny Shevlin and Amy Friede for specifics.

Church Decorating: Please set the evening of December 21st and as much time as needed on the 22nd for decorating the church or Christmas.

WORD OF INTRODUCTION

All those who wish to receive Holy Communion at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church must:

- be validly baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. Anyone who was baptized after 1970 must speak with the priest before receiving Holy Communion.
- hold all teachings of the Catholic Church. One must believe and abide by traditional Catholic moral teaching, especially regarding purity of marriage. Anyone who has received a marriage annulment since 1968 *must talk to the priest before receiving Holy Communion.*
- be in state of sanctifying grace to be able to receive Communion, having made a good confession to a traditional Roman Catholic priest.
- have a sufficient knowledge of the traditional Catholic catechism — such as the Baltimore Catechism.
- be fasting for three hours from solid food and alcoholic beverages and one hour from liquids other than water. Water and non alcoholic medicines may be taken at any time. (please note) Those who are able to do so, are encouraged to fast from midnight at those times when they plan to assist at a Mass scheduled for the morning or early afternoon.

Therefore, if a Catholic in the state of grace attends only the traditional Latin Mass, and fulfills all the traditional Catholic conditions for the worthy reception of the Blessed Sacrament, then, he or she is welcome to receive Holy Communion at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.

Anyone who adheres to the teachings of Father Leonard Feeney and Saint Benedict Center (denying the Church’s teaching concerning “baptism of desire” and “baptism of blood”), or who worships at religious services conducted by any of the Thuc bishops and clergy in concert with them, must not receive Holy Communion at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church.

Dress Code

Ladies are required to wear dresses, or full skirts and blouses. Hemlines must be long enough to touch the floor when kneeling. Necklines must be no more than two fingers-widths below the pit of the throat. Slit skirts are not acceptable; a skirt is too tight if it needs to be slit to allow walking. Ladies are also required to wear a suitable head-covering while in church. Woman wearing slacks, sleeveless dresses (including “cap” sleeves, which are not sleeves at all” or low necklines are not suitably dressed to receive Holy Communion. They should not even enter the church if their dress is immodest as outlined by these standards.

Gentlemen also must wear modest and decent clothing in church. Men must wear dress slacks and dress shirt, preferably with suit coat and tie. If their attire is immodest or indecent, they should not enter the church.

Flip-flops, shorts, sweats and T-shirts are not acceptable attire in the church at any time. The wearing of revealing, tight-fitting and transparent garments of sheer material is forbidden in the Church.

Please do not come to receive Holy Communion at this church today if you do not meet these standards of suitable dress Rather, please return when you are more appropriately attired.