



Reflection on the Scriptures of the Day
By Deacon Vince Pisano
of Holy Cross Parish

Monday of 11th Week of Ordinary Time

Today we hear Jesus quote one of the oldest laws recorded, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The law allowed for a gentleman to extract an exact punishment for which he was offended. It allowed that if one lost an eye by another then he had a right to cause the same. It could seem harsh but in actuality it was seen as being merciful. Merciful in the sense that you would not be permitted to extract more punishment than the injury received. In other words, it was a limitation on vengeance.

Jesus now turns the thinking of revenge into a law of love. To love one's neighbor is the sign of a true follower of Christ. This thinking may indeed have us thinking that if we are injured by another person then we have no recourse if we want to be a true follower of Christ. This does present us with a dilemma.

There is justice and there is mercy. To forgive someone shows the mercy of God. Mercy comes out of love for neighbor. Justice demands that the perpetrator or sinner, get the punishment deserved for the offense committed. Mercy is what we want when we are the perpetrator or sinner. Mercy is also a virtue because to be forgiven we must learn to forgive those who sin against us. Mercy is a free gift to us. Mercy is giving more than what is required whereas justice is a right.

If we are seeking to end the violence and the hatred, the racism and bigotry in our society then we must fully understand what is meant when Jesus says, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Everyone has a right to justice, but who is willing to forgive and be merciful?

"Have mercy on me oh Lord, for I am a sinner."