

Homily100619

RESPECT LIFE AND FORGIVE

Today is Respect Life Sunday. Let me tell you what I saw online this week that touched me a great deal. It was in Texas. Two years ago a white female police officer had killed a black man in his own apartment at night. She entered into his apartment thinking she was entering her own apartment. When he confronted her she thought he was attacking her. She shot him and killed him. Charges were filed against her. Recently she was put on trial for murder and a jury convicted her. At the sentencing hearing the brother of the dead man asked to testify. He might be in his late twenties.

He told the woman that he forgave her. He said that he wanted no harm to come to her. He told her that he prayed that only good things would come to her. He told her that he believed that she should give her life to Christ and that Christ would release her from her guilt. He then asked the judge if he could give the defendant a hug. The judge hesitated and then allowed him to do so. He left the witness chair went to her and held her. There, in that courtroom, she broke down in great sobs of tears. The scene lasted for a pretty long time. Then he went back to his family and she to her table.

I have lived for a long time. What I saw in those three minutes was very moving and full of faith in Jesus Christ. And rare. There was nothing in the man's words that tried to explain away what she did. He did not ask her if she felt remorse for killing his brother. It was all about her and her need to be forgiven for what she had done. He believed he was being asked by Our Lord to do what he did in forgiving her. There was no doubt in my mind that he meant every word he said.

And then I opened today's gospel and I heard the apostles, men in their late twenties and early thirties, approach Jesus and ask Him to increase their faith. Jesus does not respond to them directly. He tells them that faith and doing things are connected. Faith is meant to be lived. Faith is meant to be put into action. Faith looks differently at different times. Just like love looks differently at different times. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous. It does not put on airs, it is not rude or selfish. Love endures all things and hopes all things. Love does not always show itself as love. It shows itself as all these things.

Faith is like that too. Faith does not always show itself as faith. Faith though does not give up. Faith finds a way. Faith is willing to forgive. Faith is willing to persevere. Faith chooses to remain hopeful. Faith is truly powerful. I have seen faith bring about reconciliations. I have seen faith breathe new life into dead relationships, dead marriages. I have seen faith restore parents and children who were estranged. I have seen faith overcome obstacles that seemed insurmountable.

I have come to know and I believe that God's grace is in us already. God's grace is what enables the faith that is already in us to deepen and to intensify and to blossom. The Holy Spirit indwells you and me and it is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to make the tough choices in life. And choosing to believe in Jesus Christ and choosing to live his way humbly is a very difficult choice. It does not always attract us or appeal to us. But deep inside our hearts we know that the way of Jesus is the only way that really works in this life. The only way that leads us away from death and into life. A life that will never end.

Fundamentally the way of Jesus Christ is a way of deep respect –respect for life and respect for each person and respect for God and respect for what God seeks to accomplish. If you want the Lord to increase your faith then choose to look at life with an attitude of respect not disrespect, not criticism. Be willing to forgive for you have been forgiven. Be willing to be patient because the Lord has been patient with you. Come to Him often so He can feed you with His love, the Eucharist. Then your faith will deepen, blossom and increase.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.