FORGIVENESS IS NOT RECONCILIATION

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear faithful, in the Lord's Prayer we repeat every day words that probably very often pass with difficulty through our throats: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Truly, the commandment to love our enemies is probably the hardest of the commandments for us. It is hard for us to understand, and still harder to fulfil. Yet the Saviour Himself, praying for the forgiveness of His executioners on Good Friday during His Passion, gave us an example to follow. He showed with what love we ought to care for the soul, for the salvation, of our enemies too, and of those who often do us harm without any reason whatsoever. And Saint Jerome rightly observes: Christ commands not what is impossible, but what is perfect. And in the parable we heard today we find the answer to the question of what our forgiveness should look like towards the neighbours who have wronged us.

Dear faithful, as Catholics we understand perfectly well that Our Lord Jesus is ready to forgive us even the greatest iniquities, provided that we are sorry for them and desire to amend. Our Lord Jesus is ready to forgive us fully, completely, even when in His omniscience He is aware that this contrite sinner will rebel again in the future. Saint John Chrysostom vividly shows how total and complete God's forgiveness is: "Take a spark from a burning fire and throw it into the sea. It will go out at once in its depths. In the same way your sin vanishes, if through true sorrow and sincere confession you cast it into the unfathomable sea of God's mercy."

And when we think of the immensity of God's patience towards us, when we realise how many different sins Our Lord Jesus has forgiven us, then we should discover with dismay that we human beings are terribly vindictive towards our neighbours, devoid of understanding. We so readily keep returning to other people's faults. We forgive only seemingly, and deep in our souls we keep the sense of injury. We so readily add fuel to the fire of resentment, God forbid, of hatred.

Dear faithful, in Polish we say: "to feed ill will towards someone," "to keep a grudge against someone." Note that we use the very same words that refer to raising an animal. To feed, to keep. That is what a good farmer does. What does this mean, my dear ones? It means that a man who cannot forgive, who cannot in his heart let go of another's fault, begins to raise in himself a little monster, which he feeds, which he keeps, which he looks after like a pig. And this pig, this little monster in our heart, grows, becomes ever larger, and very often, my dear ones, it begins to be the meaning, the very essence, of a man's life. So often, my dear ones, we live on ill will, on hatred towards another person, we brood over other people's faults, and all this in its essence harms ourselves. All this kills us, kills us spiritually, weighs us down. We become slaves.

FORGETTING AND RECONCILIATION

Dear faithful, Holy Scripture admonishes us: "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Since God forgives us, we too have the duty to forgive our neighbours, even our greatest enemies. But forgiveness does not mean forgetting and reconciliation. For reconciliation to come about, it is necessary that the one who did wrong acknowledge his guilt and apologise. And this distinction we must always keep before our eyes. We have the duty to forgive, and so we must not nurse hatred or ill will towards another person, but the question of reconciliation is a separate matter. For reconciliation it is necessary that the one who did wrong strike his breast and apologise.

Christ the Lord on Good Friday prayed for forgiveness for His executioners. He prayed for the grace of contrition of heart, that they might understand that they had committed deicide. But as long as the nation that on Good Friday brought about the death of Our Lord Jesus does not strike its breast, so long will guilt weigh upon it, so long will a curse weigh upon it.

We keep hearing, my dear ones, for some years now, our ears are already swelling, about Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. It is expected of us Poles that we will

forget everything, that we will stop returning to the past, that we will not bury the victims of the Volhynia massacre, that we will stop taking an interest in it. We are only to help, help, help. But for reconciliation, my dear ones, it is necessary that the one who did wrong apologise to his victims and their descendants. How can we be reconciled with someone who spits in our face? How can we be reconciled with someone who pays homage to the criminals responsible for the death of Polish Catholics in Volhynia? Somehow we are supposed to pretend that nothing happened, when those who did wrong do not want to acknowledge their guilt. They are not ready to make amends, to apologise.

PRAYER FOR OUR ENEMIES

Dear faithful, let us fervently ask Our Lord Jesus Christ today for the grace that ill will or hatred towards another person may never find a home in our heart. Let us ask Our Lord Jesus to teach us to pray also for our enemies. Even your greatest enemy, even a person who has hurt you very badly in life, has an immortal soul. An immortal soul. We must therefore pray in a special way for the repentance, for the conversion, of those who did wrong, that their hearts may be contrite, that they may be able to see their guilt, strike their breast and apologise, because without this there is no forgiveness. Without acknowledgement of guilt there is no forgiveness of guilt.

My beloved, love of enemies exceeds our human capacities, goes beyond our human nature, demands heroism, and for its true practice God's grace is indispensable. The source of true forgiveness can only be the Catholic faith, which gives man a supernatural strength and gives forgiveness its true meaning. Bishop Adam Krasiński once wrote the following words: "He is a higher man, an angel in human form, who, avenging himself in God's way, repays evil with good." Catholic forgiveness is not pretending that nothing happened, but a pain of the heart that opens it. It is a constant readiness to answer even evil with good.

And only when we resolve that we will follow the example Our Lord Jesus gave us on Good Friday, that we will pray every day for the repentance of those who cause us grief and harm, for our persecutors, only then will we be able to pray with a clear conscience to our Father who is in heaven: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.