

## St. Louis Catholic Church

Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Lent

Daniel 3:25, 34-43

Matthew 18:21-35

God and King Nebuchadnezzar listened to the prayer of three young men in the fiery furnace. In the 3rd chapter of Daniel the youths said to the King, "If our God is able to deliver us from the furnace of burning fire, O King, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." The three men were delivered unscathed from the furnace. The important thing is that not only did the King hear their prayer, he recognized evidence when he saw it. He decreed that the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is to be revered as the true and most high God.

These three young men appealed to the boundless mercy of God. Prayer, trust, surrender and the grace of God saved the men but also transformed the King.

Peter, in the Gospel, approaches the Lord with a question about forgiveness. Is there a limit to the number of times a person should offer forgiveness. Seven? Jesus responds with a multiple of seven suggesting to his overly confident disciple that in fact there should be no limit to forgiveness. Christ is trying by use of this parable showing that we should think of forgiveness as something expected and not as something extraordinary. Don't count, in other words!

Do we get it? Christ tells this parable of a servant who does not hear the echo of his own pleading with the King as the servant in his debt approaches this hard-hearted man. He did not see in the King's treatment of him evidence of how to act toward a fellow debtor. As a result we have one of the harshest images in Scripture of how God treats the unforgiving, those who do not return mercy for mercy.

Nebuchadnezzar from Daniel got it, the unjust servant did not. As this Old Testament King came to recognize the true God so too can people come to know the mercy of God in our witness of forgiveness to those who have caused us hurt. God has forgiven us in Christ and He stands ready each day to forgive our sins. We can pray an expression of sorrow, we can apologize to our neighbor our sorrow for pain inflicted and especially we can find forgiveness in the Gift of Peace--the Sacrament of Penance or Confession.

It is God's intent that forgiveness is to free us from pain, hurt and guilt. Like Lazarus coming from the tomb and being untied, we can come back to new life freed by the mercy of God. Yet too often we can't do the same to those who hurt us. We refuse to say "I forgive you". We are still bound by the hurt that was inflicted. We are bitter, angry and dead inside.

Christ knew we would feel this way and today's Parable calls us to do to others what we ask God to do to us--offer mercy, peace and forgiveness. Today we have 2 models: Nebuchadnezzar who got it and the unjust servant who did not. With them as models we pray with special fervor during the Lord's prayer as we beg, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others".

God Bless,  
Msgr. John McArthur

Remember this is a Big Week:

1. Confessions Tuesday and Thursday --5:00-6:00 p.m. and Saturday--3:30-4:30 p.m.
2. Stations of the Cross Friday--5:30 p.m.
3. Fish Fry Friday--5:00-8:00 p.m.
4. Men's Morning of Spirituality--Saturday, April 2nd--8:30 a.m.--"Man Up"--Men's Retreat--Great Speaker--Confessions--Mass--Try to Beat That--St. Francis Church
5. Commitment Sunday for Bishop's Annual Appeal--Bring card to Pledge or Pay--It's Lent--Goal \$439,000.00--Goal--100% Participation.  
light burning.