

MARCH 11, 2018



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



2 CHRONICLES 36:14-16, 19-23

PSALM 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6

EPHESIANS 2:4-10

JOHN 3:14-21

REFLECTION

The readings this week speak of God's incredible love. The Gospel includes the famous John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son." This line gets quoted so often, I wonder if we sometimes lose sight of what it means. I think the truly miraculous element of this is the fact that God loves us despite our human failings. The First Reading speaks of times in which the Israelites—God's own chosen people—were unfaithful and abandoned God. Throughout history, humans have done this again and again. It seems almost like second nature for us to stray from our faith and our God. And yet God loves us all so much, even to the point of becoming human and dying on the Cross for us. I find it challenging to imagine anyone loving me so much that he or she could forgive me for doing something really bad. Yet God does this, not just for one person but for each and every one of us, despite our sins!

A few years ago, I made a mistake that hurt several of my friends. I allowed someone to gossip about them, and did nothing to stand up for my friends or confront the person gossiping. When my friends learned about it, they felt betrayed, and stopped speaking to me for a while. Although I apologized, it took several months for our relationships to heal. Even though I knew my mistake and offered an apology, my friends couldn't get past the hurt that I caused them. How often are we like this? How often are we unable to overlook what someone has done to us? Can we truly forgive someone if we can't let go of our own pain and resentment?

ACTION

I recently heard a quote from Bryan Stevenson, activist lawyer and author of the memoir *Just Mercy*: "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done." That is what forgiveness is all about—our ability to realize that every person, no matter what mistakes they have made, is still someone we are called to love and forgive. Here's a challenge: the next time you feel hurt by someone, ask yourself whether you can forgive them and truly love them, despite your own pain or disappointment.

JOURNALING QUESTIONS

- When you feel wronged by someone, are you truly able to get past the hurt? Are you able to reflect God's forgiving love in your own life?
- Do you see other people as being more than their mistakes or flaws?