



# ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd, Port St John FL.32927

**Sixth Sunday after Trinity  
July 7, 2024**

The passage selected for the Sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

St. Matt. 5:23-4

We close our Independence Day weekend with this powerful Gospel. It is especially important to remember this Gospel as we progress through the very contentious period that will lead to our next election. If we, as Christians, have something powerful that we can offer against the discourteous political climate, it will be our dedication to forgiveness.

It always surprises me that though we sit with our brothers and sisters in church, eat with them in the parish hall, receive the Lord's Body and Blood with them, and profess our community together, that it can all fall apart so quickly when we discuss our political leanings. Suddenly, the brother or sister that cooked our food, served us, cleaned up after us, become monsters who would deny our liberty, impoverish our lives and enslave our children.

Our politics make us very quick to condemn, and very slow to forgive. It would be a great witness to the Gospel if we could come to the

point where we acknowledge that we disagree on how to serve each other through our politics, but remember that we all agree That we must serve and love each other. We would really reflect Christ to our world, if we were quick to forgive the anger of those who disagree with us, and even more importantly, if we were quick to ask forgiveness when our own politics make us the angry and unkind party.

It is certainly difficult to forgive the injuries that are inflicted upon us. We tend to nurture our grudges and relinquish them reluctantly. However, even pop culture and pseudoscience witness the emotional and physical benefits of releasing the toxins that are the byproduct of an unwillingness to forgive. To be the one with the option to forgive is to be in a godly position, and we certainly love to give ourselves godly privilege. It's never easy to forgive, but granting forgiveness isn't as difficult as asking forgiveness.

If we read the verse from this Gospel carefully, that is the challenge that is being issued. “If your brother have aught against you, leave thy gift, go thy way, and be reconciled.” While granting forgiveness is a godly privilege, asking forgiveness, becoming the humble petitioner, puts us back in the proper relationship between the creature and the Creator. Since God has required we serve Him and prove our love for Him by the way we love our neighbor, it is an undeniable requirement of

our obedience that we also make ourselves humble petitioners when we ask forgiveness from each other.

Asking forgiveness is preaching the Gospel without words. It is by humbling ourselves, and courageously facing the chance that our request might not be granted, that we change the world. That unselfish act, whether witnessed only by the person we have hurt, or by a wider community, is holiness. There is nothing in this world we gain for ourselves by making that act of humility. Taking that risk can only be justified if we have faith in our Christian destiny to live in the eternal world of God's love. Those locked in this world of selfish pointlessness cannot remain unmoved and unconverted in the face of that witness.

I often wonder what our life in this world would be if only Adam and Eve could have asked forgiveness instead of passing blame on down the line. Remember that they sinned by pride and disobedience, but that wasn't why they were expelled. It was only when being confronted by God to make account of their sin, and refusing to do so, that they were exiled to the sadness, sickness and death that rules the world we inherit.

The unwillingness to accept responsibility for our offenses isn't just a remnant of original sin. It is the character of man that is exhibited throughout the Bible. Cain denies the murder of his brother out of jealousy. Sara denies her scornful laughter when she overheard the promise she would bear a son in her old age. King David, who was willing to put a man to death for stealing his poor neighbor's sheep, was also willing to murder his loyal soldier than ask forgiveness for committing adultery with his wife. Every denial, every rationalization for our sin, every assumption of privilege that excuses us from humbly petitioning forgiveness deepens our suffering in this kingdom of sin and death.

But the courage of asking forgiveness opens this world to the transcendent change that is the inevitable result of God's grace. Mary Magdalene washes the feet of Jesus with her tears and becomes the first witness of the Resurrection. The Good Thief confesses his sins, and joins Jesus as He opens the gates of Heaven. St Peter weeps in shame as the cock crows over his denials, and is endued with the strength and courage to lead the Apostles to into the Temple at Pentecost and throughout his life until his own crucifixion. St. Thomas repented his unbelief and established the Church in India that has persisted from the first century. St. Paul lamented his complicity in the murder of St Stephen, and extended the witness of Peter and the Apostles to the rest of the World.

Many of the merciful and charitable works that characterize the Christian character are copied in the world because there is reward for doing so in this world. People feed the poor and clothe the homeless because it makes them feel better. People pursue justice because they fear to live under autocracy or anarchy. People even forgive because it makes them feel better or even superior. If we want to make the sacrifice that is the undeniable witness to faith in Jesus Christ and the power of His forgiveness and love to change this world and open to us the next one, then we do it most uniquely when we ask forgiveness for our offenses.

I ask your forgiveness for the times I have offended or disappointed you. I pray we will all have a heartfelt contrition, and the grace and courage to ask forgiveness of all those we have offended, so that we can offer that humble and appropriate sacrifice to Jesus as we come to the altar rail to receive his Body and Blood, His Life and His Love.

*In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen*

