

February 15, 2008
Friday of the First Week of Lent

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

Ezekiel 18:21-28

Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8

Matthew 5:20-26

*Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.*

The seriousness of forgiveness is apparent here. It goes beyond our harboring anger and resentment to reconciliation. Not only are we called to let go of our resentment, we are called to *initiate* reconciliation with anyone who holds a grudge against us. Have you ever been hurt, seriously wronged by someone (someone very close which makes it even worse)? I cannot imagine that the answer is no for any one of us. In those times, it is not easy for me to take the first step toward reconciliation. In fact, much of the time, I do not even desire reconciliation. But, as time goes on, the closer we are, the more I feel the pain of separation. The more I feel the separation, the less free I feel to be myself around that person. And, in ways that I do not even notice myself, I am less free to be myself in most situations. The pain, the separation, the anger, the resentment, all of it limits me and impacts my interactions with others. I am not free to offer my gift because it is enveloped in pain, anger, bitterness, and the like. Over the many years of my life, I have watched various family members hold grudges that cause separation for years. I have watched others continue to participate outwardly in seemingly religious functions while holding grudges and refusing to heal rifts and wounds. I believe that Jesus is telling us here in this gospel passage that there is no room for this kind of self-serving attitude or behavior in our life in him. O.K., I believe it. Now it requires me to look deep within and see where I live it and where I don't. This is not a comfortable exercise, but an essential one if I really want to live what I profess.

Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.
~Martin Luther King Jr.