07 November

**GOSPEL:**

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke 17,1-6: Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of those little ones to sin. Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ’I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.”

As the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

In other words….

In the Gospel of today’s liturgy, Jesus affirms the fact that the world will continue to experience sin as a reality. But he warns those who want to follow him not to be the cause of sin. This implies that his followers are equipped to realize options that can produce better results. Among these is the rejection of sin and forgiving the sinner. This is a gospel teaching that involves wisdom of the heart that balances knowledge and love. It comes to those who are open to divine assistance. Here one may be reminded of the old saying: "To err is human, but to forgive is divine." True forgiveness finds its origin in the heart of God. It is a human quality that gives a hint to the divine in every human.

I am reminded of the song "Let there be peace on earth," which was written by Jill Jackson and whose music was composed by her husband Sy Miller in 1995. Jill’s life story cannot be likened to a bed of roses, but rather it had its ups and downs and even a time of despair. Her first husband abandoned her at a time when the USA was struggling to come out of the difficult post-World War II era. Jobless, homeless, penniless, and with a very young daughter to care for, she really struggled in life. She was unsuccessful in committing suicide. And it was then that she read the story of Jesus. She had a personal encounter with the divine. This made her understand what is essential in life, and she penned the words of the song, and her newly found husband transformed her poetry into a song. She understood that peace is God-given; it is a spirit, a soul, that is God-given. And it becomes real and tangible when it begins to take shape in the life of the one who carries it. Let there be peace, and let it begin with me. (PS: Mas better ug imong experience ani or scenarios in your life)

The disciples in today’s gospel had an insight into his heavenly truth. Having faith may give those who are considered to be at the bottom of society power. As the Lord has compared a mustard seed to a tree, a simple person with faith in what they do can influence a large number of people. Even people who are not born into noble or wealthy families can achieve greatness if they believe in their actions and goals in life. Hence, we must always remember that as God's children, we are to be a vessel of blessing for others, as we were created as God's instrument and forgiveness that brings peace must start with oneself. With that, Lord, we ask for your mercy and forgiveness for the soul of (\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_). Remember not his offenses against those to whom you promised paradise and to all souls who have already departed. May the wisdom of our hearts capture the divine in us that can make us utter before God today: "Increase our faith; this we ask in your name, Amen."