

**Meditation 2014-03-25**  
**Tuesday Of The Third Week Of Lent**

**Note:** *The Festival Of The Annunciation is today, but the meditation is based upon the Lenten Feria*

**Meditation Theme: “How Many Times?”**

**Place yourself** in the presence of Jesus Christ. Make sure He knows that every thought, action, and experience of today is dedicated exclusively to Him.

The Scenario: From the Gospel of today’s Mass

**A**T that time Jesus said to His disciples: if thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them: tell the church. And if he will not hear the church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican. Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning any thing whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by My Father Who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Then came Peter unto Him and said: Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith to him: I say not to thee, till seven times; but till seventy times seven times.

**Point 1.** – Jesus tells His disciples the proper method for the admonishment of an offender. He (your brother) should be given every opportunity to accept the truth with as much dignity as possible, but he can refuse it.

**Point 2.** – Jesus tells His disciples that they have the power of binding and loosing. He knows that the judgment he has given them will be correct.

**Point 3.** – Jesus tells Peter that there is really no limit to forgiveness. As many times as my brother may offend me, I should be willing to forgive him.

**Meditation:** Jesus instructs the Apostles regarding the admonition of sinners. First tell him (my brother who offends) privately, then in front of reliable witnesses, then before the Church. If he still will not hear the truth, then, and only then, will he be an outsider.

Do I ever follow this simple program? If my brother (in Christ) does something I know to be wrong, do I speak privately with him? Do I take him aside in charity and say “Hey! You know that this is wrong, don’t you?” Or do I go right to my neighbor’s eager ear and say “That one is SOOO wrong!” Do I give the offender the opportunity to receive instruction without the whole world knowing about it? Which would seem more likely to succeed, a private conference or a public rebuke? What about my brother would make me care? Do I keep in mind that Jesus loves him and wants him to go to Heaven?

Jesus gives His Apostles the power of binding and loosing. Does He also give it to me? Does He make me a lawgiver? Can I declare that something is so and make it so by declaring it? Why? Why not? How are the Apostles different from me? How am I different from them? Are they free to create truth? Or are they required to declare what they already know to be true? If they declare that someone or something deviates from the truth, is their declaration binding? Why? Why not?

In human relations there are limits to how many times an offender can be forgiven. Does God have these limits? Does He give a number to the times He will forgive sins? (*Seventy times seven is, mathematically, four hundred and ninety. The fathers teach that this is a metaphor for an unknowably large number.*) Jesus will forgive my sins if I am sorry for them. Does He know my level of contrition? Perfectly? Do I? If I keep committing the same sins, does that mean I may not be as sorry for them as I ought to be? If I keep committing the same sins, will God's capacity for forgiveness diminish? Might my capacity for contrition diminish? How sorry for my sins do I have to be to stop committing them? If I am not at that level of contrition, how can I get there?

**Colloquy:** Take a minute or two to converse with God, in any of His three Persons, or the Triune God complete in Himself. Tell Him what you have learned from your meditation, and thank Him for it.

**Hold the Gain:** Consider what you can do to keep the fruits of your meditation. Try to plan how you can think of them through the day, and through the days ahead. Come up with ways you can apply your conclusions to what you do in your everyday life, conversations you engage in, the choice of what movie to watch, what books you choose to read.