

Tolerance (part 1)

(12/09/2021)

In one of the hymns of the Ninth Hour, addressing ourselves to our Crucified Lord, we make the following supplication: ***“You, Oh Lord, Who are tolerant towards all, remember me in Your kingdom”***.

What profound meaning these few words contain! In them we are reminded of the countless times the Lord demonstrated His tolerance. Instead of focusing on His endurance of His declared enemies while on earth, let us examine the Lord’s manifest patience towards His own Twelve Disciples.

Consider this: Jesus was with His Disciples for three years, day and night. He personally taught them, and they witnessed His amazing miracles. In spite of this wonderful blessing, they still showed Him such little faith (see Matthew 8:26), and even worse, they abandoned Him when He was arrested! The Disciples fled, and hid in fear for their lives. The Lord did not say a single word! Not only that, His most prominent Disciple Peter denied Him! The night before, Peter said, *“Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death”* (Luke 22:33). What happened in the morning? Standing before a woman servant, he said of Christ: *“Woman, I do not know Him”* (Luke 22:57). How did the Lord react? He did not scold or rebuke him at all, but just looked at him. It was this look that set Peter on the road to repentance (see verse 61). Later, Jesus asked him three times whether he loves Him, so that he may be reinstated as an Apostle with his answers (see John 21:15-18).

These things alone, I think, reveal the amazing tolerance which Jesus showed to those who acted against Him, including those in his company. The Lord is calling us to follow His example, as St. Paul also says: *“bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do”* (Colossians 3:13). Everyone understands the necessity of forbearance in order to maintain peace in every environment we may find ourselves. The problem is that this understanding is often not acted upon. How does this happen? When someone (even those close to us, such as family or friends) bothers us or offends us in some way, we forget the connection and love we have for them. We react to what they did, and that reaction varies from mild to extreme, even hatred! Our selfishness is stirred up, and thoughts of retaliation or revenge come into the mind. Ugly thoughts take hold: *“Who do you think you are?” “Do you think I am stupid?” “He will see what is going to happen!” “I do not want to see him anymore!”*

This can happen even after a simple misunderstanding, where a word or action done by someone is misinterpreted, seen in the worst possible light. The result is alienation and

anger. How many nights have some people remained sleepless, because they were consumed with such feelings against other people! This inner turmoil has even resulted in heart attacks and strokes.

The only thing that can save us from such terrible and dangerous circumstances is tolerance.

My brothers and sisters let us not forget the diversity of ideas, opinions and aspirations that exist among us. If we also include our selfishness, stubbornness and individual personalities, then it is no surprise that frequent conflicts between people exist (even in families). When such problems arise, it is vital to try to make peace, either through mutual understanding or mediation by a third person. But this is not always possible. The other person may not want an explanation or insists that they are in the right. In cases like this, the only thing that can bring about peace is tolerance on our part.

It has been wisely said that tolerance is like engine oil. Without this “oil,” a car motor or machine is not able to work and becomes useless. It is only in tolerance that the ideal conditions are created for the resolution of misunderstanding or enmity, so that harmony in the soul can prevail in our relations.

There is a thought that can tempt a person: “If I show such tolerance, the other person might think that I accept their unjustified actions.” This is certainly not the case! Injustice never ceases to be wrong. Christian tolerance is forbearance in the name of love. No matter what evil this person may have done to me, I will act with love. In this way, I am obeying my Lord and God who has said to me to forgive and to love even my enemies. I leave everything else to God, as He knows better than I how to arrange things to help the other person realize their mistake.

This matter of tolerance has other dimensions as well, which God willing, we will continue addressing in the next Homily.