

First Friday of Lent – 2/15

"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift." (Mt. 5:23-24)

Gosh, is that why so many of our churches are half-empty on Sundays! Are the people taking this scripture to heart? Is everyone off being reconciled with their brothers and sisters? Probably not!

This is a difficult instruction to follow, isn't it? First, it presupposes that we realize that God is the light of our life and that we want to offer Him a gift in return for all that He done for us. Perhaps those who do not make it to church are not willing to acknowledge that they need to offer their gifts of time or talents to God. Perhaps they don't feel that they have anything worthwhile to offer.

If we are graced enough to know that God is the source of our strength and if we know that we need to return that gift in some way, we may be sitting in the pew. However, we then must look at our life and see if there may be some reason why this gift that we want to offer may not be the most important offering that we can make. Could reconciliation with my neighbor be more appropriate? Maybe it would be better for me to be at my neighbor's doorstep asking for forgiveness.

Maybe that person who doesn't come to church because he or she hasn't met God might make it to the altar if we reflect the person of Jesus when we stand at their doorstep seeking their forgiveness. Possibly our willingness to humble ourselves will be just the movement that will open their eyes to the power of God.

Perchance the gift that God most wants us to give is the gift of forgiveness. Maybe our churches need to be completely empty for a week or two while everyone takes care of their reconciliation business. Could it be that our churches would be filled to overflowing once we gathered again?

Reflection Questions

- 1. Which gifts am I neglecting?*
- 2. Which relationship needs reconciliation in my life?*