

August 14, 2008
Thursday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial of Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe

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

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

Ezekiel 12:1-12

Psalms 78:56-57, 58-59, 61-62

Matthew 18:21-19:1

...unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.

Unless...whom have I not forgiven, and why? I think we have misunderstood Jesus' directive to forgive. We tend to think that it means that we must overlook the wrongs that have been done to us in the name of forgiveness and go on with the relationship. How many times have you said or heard a response of, "It's OK," when someone apologizes for his or her wrongful behavior. If that were true, then the instructions in the spiritual works of mercy—to admonish the sinner and instruct the ignorant—would be suspect. We do not overlook the wrongs done unto others or us. We do not gloss over the offenses. We do not dismiss the hurt and the damage any of the wrongs do to us personally, to others, or to our world. We might even have to end the relationship. But we do not seek revenge and we do not hold a grudge. We simply let go of the right to get even. And, and this is a big and, we do not let the anger, bitterness, or desire to get even rule us and poison us. We free the person to deal with the consequences of his or her behavior, and we free ourselves to move on in life, able to embrace the goodness that is there for us to receive.

All the years you have waited for them to "make it up to you" and all the energy you expended trying to make them change (or make them pay) kept the old wounds from healing and gave pain from the past free rein to shape and even damage your life. And still they may not have changed. Nothing you have done has made them change. Indeed, they may never change. Inner peace is found by changing yourself, not the people who hurt you. And you change yourself for yourself, for the joy, serenity, peace of mind, understanding, compassion, laughter, and bright future that you get." ~Lewis B. Smedes - The Art of Forgiving: When You Need To Forgive And Don't Know How