Meet wrong with grace, and respond to injury with forgiveness

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Epiphany + 7C – Gen 45 3-15, Ps 37 1-11, 1st Cor 15 35-50, Lk 6 27-38

Forgiveness – mercy: we've seen a life-giving example of this in the past week. A young driver was in court this week for driving through a give-way sign and hitting another car with a young family in it. One of her passengers – a teenage only child – was killed, and the driver of the other car is unable to face driving any more.

But mercy, not blame, was offered by the mother of the dead young woman. After saying how her family had been *mentally destroyed* by the death of their daughter, the mother told the woman on trial something quite amazing: *I want you to overcome what has happened and to grow and achieve as I know that's what our daughter would want you to do*. And she was also offered forgiveness by the driver of the other car. He gave a moving victim impact statement, and then turning to her, said: *I can't imagine your position, but I can extend our forgiveness. Some choices in life have severe consequences, but nothing is too great for forgiveness.* The people she'd hurt so dreadfully, to whom she was so shockingly in debt, chose to set her free; to give her a new chance at life. What might she make of such a gift?

In today's scriptures, we see this mercy at work too. Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery years earlier. Today we see him in a position of total power over them, yet rather than seeking the satisfaction of revenge, he chooses to forgive them. He chooses to give them a new chance at life – and

through them, a faith-life-trajectory is set in train that we can trace directly to our gathering here.

I think it's only with stories like these in mind – that remind us we are a community of the forgiven – reconnected to life over and over again by the free gift of mercy and forgiveness – only with this in mind can we receive the astonishing challenge of today's gospel. We are to make the move from being the ones who have been given a new chance at life through Jesus – to make the move to become people who can choose to give this new chance at life to others who are in desperate need of it.

We can be like that mother, like the driver of that other car – we can be like Joseph. If we are deeply injured and wronged by others – even by those who are supposed to be our closest family – even so we are challenged to see God's purpose to set other sinners free, to reconnect the lost to the community – to the family – and to collaborate with God in that great liberation project which we call salvation history.

Where we have the power to do so, we are called to meet wrong with grace, to respond to injury with forgiveness – with the gift of a new chance at life. Doing this sets the perpetrator of the wrong free – if they choose to accept that freedom. But it sets us free too; it undoes the bonds of injury which bind them to us. God's will is always to offer a new chance at life. Can we join in that great work? Amen