

**“Believe by Asking, by Trusting”**  
**Homily by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez**  
**St. Paul and San José Parishes, Jacksonville**  
**July 28, 2013**

*17 Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle CB*

Some people think that hate is the enemy of love. It is not.

The real enemy of love is indifference. People lose hope when they believe nobody cares, and this leads to frustration, depression and even worse. We see this in the news every day.

That is how I understand the reaction of many, especially those in the African-American community, to the jury’s decision in the Zimmerman/Martin case. There is frustration that another young life is ended, because of the indifference of our society to the conditions that too often result in a deadly mixture of youth and violence.

This frustration is also related to the violence in our own neighborhoods which seems to continue on and on without hope of ending. It seems to be everywhere.

Every day in the city of Chicago a young African-American is senselessly killed. Every day! The frustration felt is that the violence needs to stop, everybody knows it needs to stop, but is not stopping.

Let us not give up hope and allow ourselves to become indifferent to the killing that seems to go on without ceasing. Peacemaking, that is, change, is possible, but it takes faith, love and persistence; in a certain sense, we have to raise our voices and “ask” the violence to end, and trust that it will.

Scripture today opens a window for us to gaze at the heart of Abraham our father in faith. For Abraham, God is real. God cares. And so Abraham goes out of his way to ask God to deliver the city from catastrophe, from destruction...he asks and trusts God.

I wonder how many of you have ever shopped in a popular market in a third world city. You go there and you find a luxurious pair of shoes. Then you begin to ask for a better price; if it is 140, you say, how about 130, and so on. If you **persist**, you will not be surprised if you walk out with the pair of shoes for \$10; the key is that you must **persist – you must ask**. And that is the point of the story in the first reading; our living God is not indifferent, He cares. He does not want the sinner to perish in his evil ways but to change, and so God is willing to provide an opportunity for redemption, but he wanted Abraham to trust Him and ask.

Someone has said only love is worthy of faith. If that is so, then you can believe in this God because he truly loves you. As St. John says, God loves you first. Abraham prayed to God with such confidence because he trusted that God was truly there for him. And God was willing to consider sparing Gomorrah because of the faith, trust and persistence of his servant, Abraham.

When I saw Pope Francis going out of his way to visit a favela barrio in Rio de Janeiro, I felt God's love is really present in that neighborhood. God's love shown by the pope's visit to the poor is an example of the kind of peacemaking that leads to trust. Francis' example is clear: do not forget these neighbors of yours...do not be indifferent to their situations.

The Gospel's little story for today is rich in simplicity. Someone was asking, at a very inopportune time, for help. It is obvious that the gentleman being asked did not want to get up, but because the unnamed asker **persisted**, he received the bread he asked for.

The lesson is simple: ask and it shall be given. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.

It is all related to how big God's heart is. How much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Dare to put the merciful God in the spot!! For God **provides**.

Each Sunday the body of Christ gathers here from its scattered presence in Jacksonville.

Such is the dignity of this listening, praying community, Sunday after Sunday. When we are about to prepare to receive Communion, we **dare, dare, dare** to recite the Lord's Prayer. It is the greatest prayer because the Son of the living God prayed it for the first time and taught us, his disciples, the children of the heavenly Father, its words. Every word counts. Each word is supremely important. At the beginning it is so lofty, thy kingdom, thy will, thy bread...at the end it is so gutsy and concrete: move us away from temptation, deliver us from evil ...

At times our prayers are so small, Jesus' prayer to the heavenly Father is magnanimous it says what we truly need to ask to attain holiness of life!

And believe it or not the Father who is so, so, rich in mercy wants to give it to you!