

God Gives Us Second Chances

Acts 5: 28-32, 40b-41; Ps. 30; Rev. 5: 11-14; Jn. 21: 1-19

Every one of us has been given a second chance at some point in our lives. Probably, we have been given second chances many times.

It probably started with our parents. We may have done something wrong; something against their wishes. And this may have made them very angry. So angry that we may have earned a spanking when that was an acceptable form of punishment. We were ashamed. We may have thought that their anger would last a long time but, a short time later, they would be treating us as if nothing had happened. They gave us another chance and we were relieved.

Or maybe you were on the school basketball team. There was one second left and your team was behind by one point. You were shooting two free throws; make two and your team wins, make one and at least you have a tie. Horrors! You miss both free throws and your team loses. You hang your head and walk off the court not able to look your teammates in the eye. You failed and you felt awful.

But in the next game, as if nothing had happened, the coach has you on the court as time winds down. Once again, your team is down by one point and your teammates give you the ball for a last second shot. You make the shot to win the game and, of course, you feel great. Not only because you sank the game-winning shot but also because your coach gave you a second chance. He gave you a chance to do something great.

Our God is a god of second chances. The Scriptures are full of examples of this. In the Old Testament, the Israelites gave God many reasons to be angry with them by straying away from Him even though He had chosen them and made a covenant with them. But God never abandoned the Israelites. He forgave them over and over.

The Gospels, too, contain numerous examples of second chances, two of which are the Prodigal Son and the Good Thief on the cross. In the Gospel for this Sunday, Jesus gives Peter a second chance. Peter is given the chance to affirm his love for Christ three times in front of a fire after having denied Him three times in front of a fire.

Jesus forgave Peter and then He gave him the great commission. He entrusted His flock to Peter telling Him that he must care for it, even to the point of death. And in the First Reading, we learn that Peter carried out his commission zealously, even going against the Jewish leaders who wanted him to stop teaching in the name of Jesus. He told them that he could only obey God rather than any person.

Peter became a great apostle and the leader of the Church because Jesus gave him a second chance. He did not allow Peter's story to end with his three-fold denial of Christ.

God continues to give us second chances. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are given the chance to repair our relationship with God, not allowing our sins to be the final word. When we are reconciled to God, He no longer remembers our sins. He permits us to get on with our lives. As He did with Peter, God gives us the chance to do something great. The question for us is: What are we doing with this opportunity?