**24thSUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [15th September, 2013]**

READINGS: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14/ 1 Tim. 1:12-17/ Luke 15:1-32

THEME: EASY ACCESS TO DEBT CANCELLATION

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Imagine the immense ingratitude of a people who so soon forgot Yahweh who had mightily delivered them from the misery of their slavery, and attributed their deliverance not even to an intelligent or living being, but to an inanimate golden calf which they had made with their own hands. This is truly an ingratitude crystalized into a demeaning idolatry – they broke the very first commandment God was giving them through Moses. Yet when Moses pleaded with God, the One whose mercy is ineffable forgave the Israelites (Ex. 32: first reading).

About a thousand, two hundred years later, Saul, a descendant of those Israelites who made it to the Promised Land, would persecute Christians: some were imprisoned and others (like St. Stephen) suffered death because of their faith in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the stain of the blood of the holy men and women on Saul, he also enjoyed the mercy and forgiveness of God. Saul, now Paul confesses: ‘***Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life***’ (1 Tim.1:15-16; second reading).

These stories of God’s mercy and forgiveness prepare us for the threefold parables (lost and found coin, sheep and prodigal son) told by Jesus to emphasize the fact that God’s mercy is more readily available than the air we breathe in; for we enjoy it even when we have not asked for it. If His sunshine and rainfall are enjoyed by both good and bad persons, then it should be obvious some bad persons enjoy God’s mercy even when they have not pleaded for forgiveness.

Furthermore, is there any bank that thrives on the cancellation of the debts of clients? I guess you can’t imagine the existence of such a bank; and you can’t wait to do business with such bank if one should ever exist! Beloved I have gooooood news for you! God is running such a bank! He is in the business of cancelling over and over again the debts of our sins! And, what is more: they are debts we can never never pay! Beloved, the three parables give us a snapshot of what happens in heaven when our debts are cancelled: the whole heaven rejoices with God anytime we ask for forgiveness. Can you imagine that: when many creditors are angrily pursuing their debtors, God and the whole company of heaven rejoice when we ask for forgiveness!

Beloved, let us begin to process our request for the cancellation of the debt of our sins: we need not a paper for our application, but our heart – a contrite heart; we need not a pen to write the application, but our mind to decide; we need not some ink to scribble, but the ‘blood which speaks [and writes] more eloquently than that of Abel’ (Heb. 12:24); we need not a postal service to mail our application, but the ever-present grace of the Holy Spirit whose Expedite Mail Service (EMS) travels faster than the speed of light, sending our plea to the mercy seat of God the very moment we repent; we donot need a bank CEO to endorse our application, but Jesus Himself, who is seated at the right hand of the mercy throne, and whose words constantly re-echo to Father’s eager ears and ever-merciful heart: ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’! Let it be so for us this moment and always; amen!