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Late one night a cheerful truck driver pulled up to a roadside café for some refreshments. As he was eating, three mean-looking bikers roared up to the café's entrance. Immediately they picked on the truck driver as a target for their nastiness. One poured salt and pepper on his head, another took his apple pie, placed it on the floor and squashed it under a dirty boot; the third knocked over his coffee, causing it to spill on his lap. The driver didn't say a word. He merely rose, walked slowly to the cashier, calmly paid for his meal and made his exit. 'That guy ain't much of a fighter', sneered one of the bikers. The waiter peered out of the window and said: 'He doesn't seem to be much of a driver either. He's just run his truck over three motorbikes'.

Well with a note of glee we might be tempted to say 'they got what they deserve'. They say that revenge is sweet but eventually it leaves a sour taste in the mouth. You may remember the 1990's war between Serbia and Croatia. Some historians say that settling old scores from WW11 days had a lot to do with it. We know that in the time of the Old Testament i.e. before Christ, the teaching in the bible was '*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*'. That may be part of the reason why brokering peace in Middle East is such hard work. They're stuck in a time warp. Loving their neighbour as themselves hasn't crossed their mind yet. Another well-known Old Testament verse was used in the lead-up to the terrible bombing of Dresden in 1945 - '*they sowed the wind they'll reap the whirlwind*'. My guess is that revenge had something to do with it. 'He who exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord'

Many people in their personal lives have old scores to be settled - all waiting for an opportunity to get even. Feuds, vendettas, grudges are often nurtured in parishes, in streets and especially in families. Many are even passed down the

generations. Some make up and bury the hatchet but even then, they like to mark the spot.

Jesus died on the Cross to cancel all the debt of our sins. If Jesus has cancelled our debt, why do we hold others to ransom? The First Reading reminds us: 'Resentment and anger, these are foul things and both are found with the sinner'. A good example of heroic forgiveness was when the late Pope Saint John Paul 11 visited the prison cell of the man who tried to kill him to offer forgiveness.

We're advised not to let the 'sun go down on our anger'. In forgiving someone we're not downplaying or trivialising their wrongdoing but hoping they'll 'come to their senses' like the Prodigal son who was later reconciled to his father. The father didn't make him pay for the hurt he had caused him. Regrettably some carry their unforgiveness to the grave. God can only forgive us inasmuch as we forgive others.

There is no relationship so strained, no hurt so painful, no sin so heinous, no heart so wounded that cannot be healed by the grace of God's mercy and our pardon. Revenge has no place in God's Kingdom.