

We all may remember the story of how in combat David, the small youth, overcame Goliath, the giant. By doing so, David prevented a terrible war. Because of this David was a hero to the people, but wasn't liked very much by Saul. Saul convinced himself that David was his enemy and was going to take his throne away. He tried without success to eliminate David. There is an old saying that turnabout is fair play, and in our first reading David has the opportunity to eliminate Saul, but out of respect for him as the Lords anointed he refuses to do so. He goes so far as to forgive Saul for his attack upon him.

Where today do we find an example like that of David? Surely not among politicians who assassinate each other with words and TV ads during every political campaign and debate. Those 47 Democrats who are running for President are nice to each other now, but just wait. We do have however an excellent model in Saint John Paul II. After he recovered from the assassination attempt, when he was shot in St. Peter's Square, one of the first things he did was to visit his assailant in prison to offer him forgiveness and reconciliation. There is a story about Cardinal Bernardin, who was the Archbishop of Chicago, who was falsely accused of having molested a man in his youth. The man

soon recanted his story. It would have been understandable if the Cardinal had railed in outrage against his dishonest accuser, but the Cardinal sought him out to forgive him. These are two incredible examples of forgiveness. But, lets look beyond these two outstanding men to the person of Jesus. What did Jesus preach? He preached compassion, He preached forgiveness and He preached reconciliation, as we learn in today's Gospel; His teaching is very opposite of what we hear and see in our society today. It's one thing to preach it, but Jesus practiced what He preached. When Jesus looked out upon those who crucified Him, He prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing." We are called to be people who follow the teachings and the examples of Jesus. We are called to be compassionate, we are called to be forgiving, we are called to be respectful, and we are called to do this not only privately but publicly as well. We are called to do this in everything that effects us personally. We don't have to live long to have someone hurt us deeply, either by saying terrible things behind our backs, or by doing something which harms us seriously. We shouldn't hold on to these things, we should try to get rid of them by offering forgiveness and reconciliation to anyone who has harmed us. We heard today; "But rather, love your

enemies and do good to them, and lend without expecting anything back.” Easier said than done, right? But, if we are to imitate Christ, we need to practice mercy and compassion more frequently. Let’s try to start with that little daily annoyances that we experience, that unkind word or that hateful glance we receive. Instead of trying to figure out how to get back at that person, try saying a quick little prayer for them. Mercy and compassion will put us on the path that Jesus wants us to follow.