

# EPIPHANY 7

## Year C

*The Rt. Rev. Eduardo Coelho Grillo, bishop of Rio de Janeiro, was born and baptized in Porto Alegre in the south of Brazil, on November 19, 1964, in an Anglican family. Right after his confirmation, he joined his parish's youth group, which helped him to find out that the church was much wider than his home parish. He had his theological training at the National Episcopal Seminary (1985-1988), was ordained deacon in January 1989, and made a priest seven months later. In April 2017, he was consecrated bishop in the Diocese of Rio de Janeiro. His ministry is mostly focused on pastoral care and spiritual growth. He believes that, as a bishop, his main task is to prepare church ministers (lay and ordained) to be sensitive to acknowledging God's loving presence amid the hard social reality of his country. He likes reading and talking about spirituality and worship. Bible study and pastoral visiting are also things that he enjoys. He likes to be in touch with people. As people say he is a good listener, he is always ready for a good chat.*

*This Bible study is part of a series produced by the Office of Global Partnerships of The Episcopal Church.*

### Genesis 45:3-11, 15

<sup>3</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

<sup>4</sup>Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup>For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. <sup>7</sup>God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors. <sup>8</sup>So it was not you who sent me here but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me; do not delay. <sup>10</sup>You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. <sup>11</sup>I will provide for you there, since there are five more years of famine to come, so that you and your household and all that you have will not come to poverty.'

<sup>15</sup>And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

### Commentary from Eduardo Coelho Grillo

The story of Joseph is well known. His brothers sold him to merchants and, after some time dealing with imprisonment and dreams, he ended up becoming a great administrator in the land of Egypt. Today's reading brings us a reunion between Joseph and his brothers. Such an emotional meeting brought not only regret and sadness but also joy and reconciliation. All that in a few verses, in a few sentences. By that family story, we are invited to reflect on reconciliation and rebuilding relationships. As we read that passage lightly, it may sound as if the forgiveness was instantaneous between Joseph and his brothers. In fact, they all had to overcome resentment and guilt to move forward. They were called by God, as Joseph points out, to restore their family bonds as life challenged them all with famine and difficult living conditions.

### Discussion Questions

Have you ever felt betrayed or despised by those you love or trust (family, friends, mates, etc.)?

Do you believe in reconciliation and forgiveness as essential experiences for mental and spiritual health?

## Psalm 37:1-12, 41-42

- <sup>1</sup> Do not fret yourself because of evildoers; \*  
do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
- <sup>2</sup> For they shall soon wither like the grass, \*  
and like the green grass fade away.
- <sup>3</sup> Put your trust in the Lord and do good; \*  
dwell in the land and feed on its riches.
- <sup>4</sup> Take delight in the Lord, \*  
and he shall give you your heart's desire.
- <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the Lord and put your trust in him, \*  
and he will bring it to pass.
- <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteousness as clear as the light\*  
and your just dealing as the noonday.
- <sup>7</sup> Be still before the Lord \*  
and wait patiently for him.
- <sup>8</sup> Do not fret yourself over the one who prospers, \*  
the one who succeeds in evil schemes.
- <sup>9</sup> Refrain from anger, leave rage alone; \*  
do not fret yourself; it leads only to evil.
- <sup>10</sup> For evildoers shall be cut off, \*  
but those who wait upon the Lord shall possess the land.
- <sup>11</sup> In a little while the wicked shall be no more; \*  
you shall search out their place, but they will not be there.
- <sup>12</sup> But the lowly shall possess the land; \*  
they will delight in abundance of peace.
- <sup>41</sup> But the deliverance of the righteous comes from the Lord; \*  
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
- <sup>42</sup> The Lord will help them and rescue them; \*  
he will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them,  
because they seek refuge in him.

## Commentary from Eduardo Coelho Grillo

The psalms are those beloved ancient prayers that have been consoling and inspiring Christians for centuries. Trustful, dramatic, joyful, and thoughtful – the psalms invite us to wait on God's merciful and unending love. They usually encourage us to put our trust in God who is the one who cares for all creation. The psalms are keen on expressing all the dimensions of life: good and bad things happen to everyone, suffering and injustice, sadness and loneliness – but joy, freedom, and companionship as well. Psalm 37 insists that we should wait patiently on the Lord and we will be lovingly rewarded.

## Discussion Questions

Do you pray with the psalms in your personal moments of prayer?

Do you know that you can pray the whole psalter within a month using the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer?

## 1 Corinthians 15:35-38,42-50

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?” <sup>36</sup> Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>42</sup> So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the physical and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As one of dust, so are those who are of the dust, and as one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we will also bear the image of the one of heaven.

<sup>50</sup> What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

### Commentary from Eduardo Coelho Grillo

The Apostle Paul was a person who loved to write using meaningful words and expressions and their opposite words. In his letter to his fellow Christians of the Church in Corinth, he spoke about the Resurrection in terms of great contrasts: perishable/imperishable, dishonor/glory, weakness/power, physical body/spiritual body. Essentially, the apostle wanted to remind us about the transforming way of God’s works in this world. Nothing will remain the same; everything and everyone is to be changed and improved by God’s loving action.

### Discussion Questions

Can you see God’s unexpected ways of changing things and situations in life?

In a world ruled by the idea of money and success, how can we trust in God’s promises when we are poor or weak?

## Luke 6:27-38

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. <sup>29</sup> If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would have them do to you.

<sup>32</sup> “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. <sup>35</sup> Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

<sup>37</sup> “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

## Commentary from Eduardo Coelho Grillo

Luke's Gospel can be very disturbing sometimes. There is a loving and forgiving father of two stubborn sons. There is a suspicious foreigner (the Samaritan) who shows mercy and compassion and fulfills the will of God. There is also the Magnificat, a biblical poem where the poor ones are highly exalted and the rich ones are sent empty away. We live in a world where even bank services and credit cards offer cashback and all sorts of returning advantages, but the Lord Jesus asks us to “love [our] enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” How can that be? Our call to be merciful is far beyond our skills and virtues, isn't it? Perhaps we will find some answers if we just go back to the issue of trusting our lives and futures to God and waiting on the Father's love, as we just read in the previous readings. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

## Discussion Questions

How can we possibly accept and obey Jesus' words in verses 27 and 28: “I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you”? Is that something reasonable these days?

What does it really mean to be merciful these days? Isn't that too naïve?