

## TODAY THE SHOVEL GOES IN THE GROUND, HALLELUJAH!

What we have been waiting years for is finally here! Today (Sunday), we will celebrate the blessing of the site of the new church and break ground (and of course, have food) at 3 pm at 10010 Carolina Trace. ALL ARE WELCOME!

Parking is available at Minges Funeral Home, the library, Harrison Building & Loan, Mercy Health Complex and Crossroad Health Center. There will be shuttle service available from the locations, and drop off and pick up for the disabled is right at the building site. (Please figure the time for parking and shuttling into consideration so that you can arrive on time.)

Groundbreaking celebrations can take place sometime before the actual work begins, or after it has begun. Our plan is that on Monday, the bulldozers will arrive and start digging. If for some reason they cannot start that day, it will be very soon after that. So that you don't think that they began in the wrong place, the first work will begin across the street to bring the utilities over to our property.

You may have noticed that only a small portion of the soybeans on our land has been harvested. By the time the preparatory utilities work is completed, the soy beans will be ready for harvest. (At least that's what they tell me. The only thing I know about soy beans is that you can make a lot of different stuff from them.)

As a community relying on the help of God, we have worked hard and sacrificed much to get to this point. We deserve to celebrate together. I hope to see you all there.

**I KNOW IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE...** but I am not perfect. (Well, let me clarify; it is hard for me to imagine that I am not perfect; it is hard for you to imagine that I realize that I am not perfect.) Today's gospel (Mt 18: 21-35) is one that brings home my (and probably your) lack of perfection. I think that all of us struggle with forgiving others. For some people, it can be difficult to forgive anyone; that does not make them bad people; it is just that it is not a virtue natural to them. (I often think of our moral abilities like our intellectual abilities; we are strong in some virtues like we are in some intellectual areas; in some moral areas, we struggle, just as we do in intellectual areas.) For others of us, we might usually be able to forgive, but there are some people who we have a hard time forgiving. The inability or refusal to forgive is problematic for the Christian, since it is the chief moral act which is a condition for God forgiving us. We see so this so well spelled out in today's parable.

Why is God so big on us needing to forgive others? I think the answer lies in our origins. Remember when God created humankind; what was it He did?

God said: "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness" ... God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. (Gen 1: 26-27)

God made us in his likeness. The purpose of us being in his likeness is so that we can be united to him. In fact, the reason he sent His beloved Son to die for us is so that we may be in his likeness again after we had destroyed this likeness by sinning. It was in our spiritual DNA at creation to love as God loves; but original sin impaired us from this gift. The core of being in the likeness of God is love, and an integral part of love is forgiveness. Unforgiveness separates us from God, not because God simply chooses to make it so, but because it goes against the very nature of God not to forgive.

The forgiveness Christ brought us is the gift of being like God in love. If we accept Christ's forgiveness, we have to become like God in love. We cannot say to God, "I seek to be one with you, but I also will go against you." Luckily, even to whatever degree we are able to forgive or not forgive, God sees our efforts to forgive, to reconcile. Because of our broken human nature, it takes time for us to heal and to forgive. Thankfully, God does not judge us by whether we are perfect forgivers, but whether we try to be forgiving of all. Let us strive to live in the true and full image of God, a merciful God and a forgiving God. Then we will truly be united with Him in His essence, love itself.