

Be Forgiving of One Another

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:30-32

The oldest Christian site in Ireland is said to be the St. Patrick’s Cathedral in Dublin. But what makes this Cathedral so interesting is not how old the building is but the uniqueness of the door. The door which stands very tall, has a rectangular hole crudely cut out of the middle of it. People come from miles around to see this hole created by human hands and be reminded of what God does through people. In 1492, two prominent Irish families, the Ormonds and Kildares, were in the midst of a bitter feud. The feud began simple enough, a few hurtful words here, a harsh word behind the back there, yet the tensions grew until tempers got the better of the two families and the feud became physical. The two families built up an armies and began one of the largest wars Ireland had seen to date.

In the end the Earl of Ormonds was over powered and he took his family and what remained of his army and held up in the Cathedral for many days awaiting for their destined doom. After many days the Earl of Kildares began to reflect on the actions of the two families. He thought, “Here were two families worshiping the same God, in the same church, living in the same country, trying to kill each other.” He decided for the sake of peace and reconciliation he would call out to the Earl of Ormonds to forgive one another and live together in Christian harmony. But the Earl of Ormonds was completely convinced that this was merely a trap to get them outside of the door. So the Earl of Kildares took a spear; chopped a rectangular hole in the door and stuck his hand through the door first. It was a tense moment, as no one was sure if the Earl would keep his arm, until at last the two men grasped arms and they were united in reconciliation and the bound of love toward Christ.

The Scottish have a saying, maybe you have heard it, “Chancing one’s arm.” It came about from the incident at St. Patrick’s – it means to “take a chance” especially in reaching out to someone in reconciliation. Christ calls us to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and slander, be put away. He calls us to love one another and forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven us. He calls us to “chance one another’s arms.” Christ gave His life that we would have the forgiveness of all of our sins. Who then are we to keep forgiveness from a fellow Christian? We need to reach out to one another in peace and love in Christ, that we might receive His gifts of body and blood with a clear and clean conscience. Just as Christ Himself tells us, “I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift,” (Matthew 5:22-24). Christ our Lord through the Holy Spirit allow us all to put aside all differences and anger and “chance the arm” for peace in Christ. Not our will, but Thy will be done, Lord.