

**Sermon, Father William J. Albinger**

**September 14, 2008**

Proper 19A 2008

In the name of our ever creating, ever redeeming and ever sustaining God:  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our lesson from the Hebrew Scriptures, we continue our story of Moses and the flight from Egypt into the Promised Land. God has heard the cries of his people the Israelites arising from their enslavement and oppression by the Egyptians. He sends Moses to remind them that he is the God of their fathers and faithful to the covenant he made with Abraham. Moses has led them out of Egypt and now they find themselves between a rock and a hard place. The Red Sea is before them and the approaching Egyptian Army is approaching from behind them. For the first of many times they complain about Moses' leadership and would prefer to be back as slaves in Egypt. In what seems to be a miracle, the Sea parts and they pass over to safety. God has shown mercy and saved God's people. But did you notice that God did not act alone? Moses, acting on behalf of the people, had to show faith in God's promise, pick up the staff and strike the water!

Jesus picks up on this theme in our Gospel reading. A slave faces an equally daunting and impossible situation. He owes the king ten thousand talents – an

unimaginable amount of money – millions of dollars. He can't pay and the king, as was his right under Jewish law, was going to sell the slave and his wife and children and property to satisfy the debt. The slave begs forgiveness and promises to pay. As ludicrous as the slave's promise is, the king grants mercy. Immediately thereafter, the same slave demands payment of a small debt from another slave. This slave makes the same request that the forgiven slave had made of the king but is denied even though his debt probably could have been eventually repaid. Hearing of this, the King revokes his mercy and imprisons the unforgiving slave. The lesson here is that God's mercy and goodness call for a response. God's covenant calls us into ethical relationship with one another. We are called to transcend fear and selfishness to work for the common good. We are called to treat one another as we would be treated.

This sermon today is going to be different, because I am going to ask you to be part of it. As many of you know, I have been a leader in the organization of a new ecumenical faith-based group called Face of Maui; FACE standing for 'faith in action for community equity'. Like the Israelites in Egypt, we have injustices and problems here on Maui today. Power is exercised on Maui by our political and economic leaders, but is it being exercised ethically and for the common good? Our gospel lesson teaches us that God expects that it should be and that we are accountable.

FACE is presently doing a listening process of the communities concerns and will have a meeting on Sept. 22 to listen to what the people are saying and to pick and

prioritize the justice issues that need to be addressed. I'm asking you now to participate in that process.

The ushers are passing out cards and pencils. I'd like you to first pair off into 2s or 3s and discuss for 5 or so minutes what you love about Maui and what keeps you here or, for our visitors, draws you here and what major problems or injustices need to be addressed and fixed – these could be ecological, economic, or relate to social issues or problem. Then, I'd ask you to fill out the front of the card “What I love most about Maui” and the back of the card “The biggest threats to the Maui I love are:”

If we are going to cross over to a more just Maui, we are going to have to pick up the staff and act to strike our barriers – and for starters that is the pencil in your hand.