

Show Notes
Justice and Mercy
March 8, 2008

Stan Williams hosted the show tonight. He outlined the dilemma in defining Justice and Mercy, especially in light of current moral and legal lapses by government officials at all levels. Stan even quoted from an atheistic blog on the topic, and commented on the inherent fallacies in the bloggers challenge of Christian belief. Stan mentioned the current sex scandals in the media that have entrapped several governmental figures, and the police and prosecutorial abuse via the plight of Daniel Turner (<http://danielturner.blogspot.com>), and a mother who was taken away in handcuffs for leaving her child locked in a car a few yards from where he was in full sight of the car and child. He then welcomed, by phone, Dr. Robert Fastiggi, Professor of Systematic Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary to the show and asked him to define “justice” and “mercy” in Catholic terms (which were significantly different from the atheistic blogger), and then discuss the proper response of moral men and women to the scandals. Larry, a caller from Florida listening on the Internet asked Dr. Fastiggi if the Iraq war was just. Then we ended talking about the balance of response a moral society should have toward a mother who has aborted her child.

We did not have time for the following, which is worthy.

Fr. John Riccardo’s Response...

...to these 3/14/08 show questions:

How does the rational, moral man balance the temporal application of justice and mercy in the carrying out of his responsibility to build a fair, just, and ordered society or community?

Where are the limits of justice and mercy as we respond to the abuse of power and trust of our elected officials.

Stan:

This is much needed topic to be sure and one that is filled with many nuances and thus easily misunderstood. Here are a couple of quick thoughts:

1. There is a demand to forgive. Period. To forgive has nothing to do with feelings, nor does it have to do with forgetting. It has to do with the will. In choosing to forgive another I am saying, "The wrong that you have done (and thus there is an acknowledgement of wrong doing, of evil even), I do not will you to suffer for. I want instead for you only the good." As Christians we are commanded to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us, and Jesus tells us that the measure we measure out to others is the measure that will be measured back to us. Thus, the appeal to err on the side of mercy.

2. But though we do forgive and extend mercy that doesn't mean that there are not repercussions or that we necessarily just move on. While it's not always the case it can be the case that someone, through their sin, reveals himself to be undeserving of trust (this is not incompatible

with forgiveness). It is also the case that when someone does something of a criminal nature, though they are forgiven, serious consequences follow from the actions chosen. And so to remove someone from public office can be the just thing to do and is not irreconcilable with mercy and forgiveness.

3. In the midst of all these things though we have to be very careful to make the distinction between judging the actions of ourselves and others (which I am supposed to do) and making judgments about the interior/the heart of the one who did whatever they did (which I am commanded not to do)., So we judge actions but we can never judge the heart, for the interior of another is never known by anyone else.

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Fr. John is featured in the best selling DVD: *Common Ground: What Protestants and Catholics Can Learn From Each Other* (available at <http://www.CatholicProtestant.com>)