

In the novel “All Quiet on the Western Front” there is a moving scene. A battle rages between French and German soldiers. A young German soldier lies in a shell hole, taking cover from artillery fire.

Suddenly a French soldier leaps into the same hole seeking cover. Before the Frenchman can do anything, the German bayonets him several times. But the French soldier doesn't die immediately. He lingers on.

The young German, hardly more than a boy, studies the Frenchman's frightened eyes. He sees his mouth hanging half open and his lips dry and parched. The sight moves him to pity and he gives his enemy a drink of water from his own canteen.

When the Frenchman finally dies, the young German feels great remorse. This is the first man he has killed. He wonders what his name is.

Seeing a wallet in the dead man's, he removes it reverently. In it are a few family photographs, one of a woman and a small girl.

The German soldier is deeply touched. He suddenly realizes that the dying man is not an enemy, but a father and husband – a human being who loves and is loved just like himself. Moved to pity, he takes a piece of paper and copies down the dead man's address. He will write a letter to his wife.

What happened in the shell hole? Did the German soldier suddenly realize his duty to love his fellow man and force himself to love the dying soldier?

Not really! What was it. He suddenly saw the man who was supposed to be his enemy in a whole new light. And it was his change of vision that changed his attitude.

We know how hard it is to forgive. You might have somebody up there in sight who is so hard, almost impossible to forgive. It might seem that you're going to carry this right to your grave.

Today's Gospel is saying to us “Take another look. Recall how much you have been forgiven. How much Jesus has forgiven you.”

Remember that as Jesus hung on the cross He prayed, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Let go, let go even of childhood hurts. Claim the freedom of love, the freedom of God's love. We were created to be free. May we see our enemy in a new light and receive the Eucharist with a full heart.