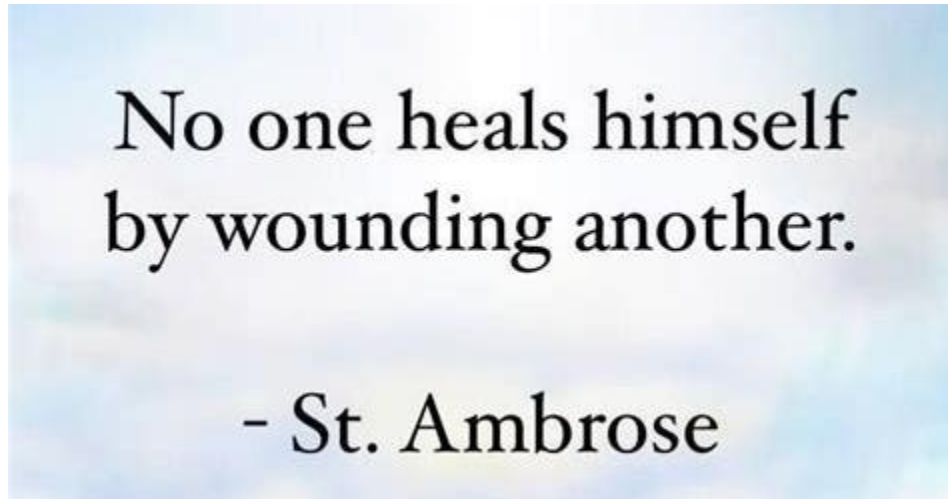


FROM FATHER JOHN: *"But this is the covenant I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them upon their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his fellow citizen and kinsman, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from least to greatest. For I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sins no more."* (Hebrews 8:10 – 12)



Wednesday was the Memorial of St. Monica and Thursday was the Memorial of her son, St. Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church. There are a number of interesting facts about this mother-son team of saints. One of them is the fact that St. Ambrose was the spiritual director for both saints and was a crucial instrument of God's will in bringing St. Augustine into the Church. St. Ambrose baptized St. Augustine on Easter in the year 387 A.D. St. Ambrose is one of the four original doctors of the Church. He was the Bishop of Milan and became one of the most important theological figures of the 4th century.

St. Ambrose was born around 340 A.D. to a Roman Christian family and grew up in Trier, Belgic Gaul, which is in present-day Germany. He was educated in Rome and studied law, literature and rhetoric. He was given a place on the Roman Council and was the Consular Prefect, which is the office of Governor, of Liguria and Emilia. The seat was in Milan and St. Ambrose named Bishop of Milan in 372 A.D. He held the beliefs of the Nicene Creed against the heresies of Arianism although he treated the heretics with charity. After his ordination to the episcopacy, he donated all his land and money to the poor which made him very popular in Milan and the surrounding area.

He wrote several great theological treatises. One of them was entitled, *The Explanation of the Psalms*. I want to share an excerpt from this document with you. In it, St. Ambrose discusses the fact that we are reconciled to God the Father once and for all by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you find his excerpt as comforting as I do.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

FROM ST. AMBROSE:

“Christ has reconciled the world to God by his own blood. In reconciling the world to God, Christ stood in no need of reconciliation for himself. What sin of his was there to atone for, sinless as he was? When he was asked for the temple-tax, a sin-offering imposed by the law, he said to Peter: *Simon, from whom do the kings of the earth receive tribute or tax? From their own sons or from strangers?* Peter replied: *From strangers.* The Lord said to him: *Then the sons are free. But so as not to give scandal to them, cast a hook and take the first fish that comes; open its mouth, and you will find a shekel. Take it and give it to them for me and for you.*

Christ shows that he does not need to atone for sin on his own behalf: he is no slave of sin but, as Son of God, is free from all sin. The Son sets free, a slave remains in his sin. Christ is therefore free of all sin, and does not pay the price of his own redemption. His blood could pay the ransom for all the sins of the whole world. The one who has no debt to pay for himself is the right person to set others free.

It is not only that Christ has no ransom to pay or atonement to make for his own sins; if we apply his words to every individual man they can be taken to mean that individuals do not need to make atonement for themselves, for Christ is the atonement for all, the redemption for all.

Is any man's blood fit to redeem him, seeing that it was Christ who shed his blood for the redemption of all? Is anyone's blood comparable to Christ's? Is anyone great enough to make atonement for himself over and above the atonement which Christ has offered in himself, Christ who alone has reconciled the world to God by his blood? What greater victim, what more excellent sacrifice, what better advocate can there be than he who became the propitiation for the sins of all, and gave his life for us as our redemption?

We do not need, then, to look for an atonement or redemption made by each individual, because the price paid for all is the blood of Christ, that blood by which the Lord Jesus has redeemed us, he who alone has reconciled us to the Father. He has labored even to the end, shouldering our burdens himself. Come to me, he says, all you that labor, and I will refresh you.”