

The recent terrorist attack in London issued a grim reminder of what wicked people can do with the power they hold. Such attacks offend human life. They interfere with God's plan for the good of all creation. They spread despair where Christians bring hope. Killing is always serious matter, but the killing of innocent life is unacceptable to any rational human being.

None of us would ever think of blowing up innocent life. We would not misuse our power that way. But we do misuse power. In romantic relationships one partner often pressures another. In business a supervisor can mistreat an employee. At schools we isolate people who could otherwise become our friends. We all have power, which we use and abuse.

Our experience of powerful people is whatever they say goes. They don't have to explain why they do what they do. They get away with it because they have position, money, good looks or connections. Powerful people do not have to be forgiving. If they forgive, as rich nations today are struggling to do with the debt of poor nations, it seems merciful and charitable. Yet sometimes we choose not to forgive our neighbor as a way of exercising power.

Today's passage from the Book of Wisdom is a prayer offered to God who possesses ultimate power. It starts with this premise: "There is no god besides you." God has no competition. God can do whatever he pleases. God does not have to explain why he does what he does. He does not have to prove why his ways are more just than the ways of some other god. There is only one God. What does God do with this power? Does God punish? Is God selfish? No. The Book of Wisdom says God uses power with compassion. "Though you are master of might," the prayer continues, "you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us." This is how God chooses to use power – with mercy. God permits us to repent and extends forgiveness.

How different this is from the ways of the wicked, most evident in the ways of terrorists. Yes, they have some power, but they misuse it. They judge with harshness. They offer no leniency even to the innocent, and they give no opportunity to reconcile.

Christianity is not a church of terrorists, but we are a church of sinners. Sinners are not like God when we use our power. We want things to go our way. We mistreat those we don't like. We judge others without even knowing who they are. And we withhold forgiveness from those who seek peace. How different are our ways from the ways of God.

Jesus says God will separate weeds from wheat in the harvest at the end of time. By meditating on the word of God, by seeking peace with our

neighbor, and by loving as Jesus loved us, we will prepare ourselves to be part of God's fruitful harvest.