

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 13, 2020

“How often must I forgive?

As many as seven times?”

– Matthew 18:21

Jesus replies, “I say to you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Another translation has him saying seventy times seven! Does that mean that we can let offenders have it if they exceed 490 times in their foolishness? Or does the command to forgive have no boundaries, no upper limits? As Gustavo Gutiérrez observes, “there are no limits; love is not compatible with obligations that can be counted.”

Sirach and Jesus both share what to do with anger or injury, any mini- or maxi-aggressions that may have assaulted us. Sirach focuses on the negative, with people harboring their resentments, hugging them tightly. Jesus prods us to shake them off and restore peace – especially since our infractions toward God and the community may be far greater than the ones we see in others.

Human nature doesn't seem to have changed much since Sirach's time, 300 years before Christ. Sirach observed that some people go through life pressing on their bruises. Such folks are loathe to let an injury heal or go away; they seem to find comfort or moral security in the status of being the injured party. We've all met people like that. Sometimes they're us!

We can picture Peter looking around at the other disciples and raising an eyebrow as he asks Jesus, “How often do I have to forgive such as these?” With princely magnanimity, he proposes going to extremes. His question and semi-offer, “seven times?” is really a way of asking, “Should I forgive lots more often than seems to be reasonable?” Jesus responds with what could be made into a rhythmic playground chant or Double Dutch phrase: “Not just seven / but seventy-seven / over and again / forever and ever / Amen!”

To help the disciples absorb the message, Jesus weaves them a tale about a great con-artist who amassed a debt so big that their language didn't have real numbers to describe it. Kids would say that he or she owed a gazillion. That first servant's debt was ten thousand talents (a talent is a unit of currency equivalent to 100 pounds of silver). The second servant owed the first servant 100 denarii (a denarius is an average day's wage). Archaeological economists have determined that one talent was the equivalent of six thousand denarii. Therefore, the second servant's debt was one-six-hundred-thousandth of the first servant's debt!

Putting on an Oscar-worthy sad face, the debtor begged for a little time to get it together, and the master let him off the hook knowing that repayment was ridiculously improbable. Then, that wicked charlatan who should have been throwing a block party to celebrate his redemption, instead threw one of his poor companions in jail for a debt that, while miniscule in comparison to the first, was way more than the poor guy could come up with. Of course, nobody cried when they heard that the once-forgiven, never-forgiving debtor ended up getting just what he had given the other.

Peter asked Jesus: "How often must I forgive?" Sirach asks us: "Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself?" Jesus asks us what kind of world we wish to create. In the long run, forgiving what others have done may be a very small price to pay for the privilege of living in a world where the compassion of God appears not just seven times but "seventy-seven / over and again / now and forever / Amen!"

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Prelude: Sing along with "Walk Together Children, Don't Get Weary" sung by the Mount of Olives Church Choir, Naalya, Uganda
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1iEAXtC1dc>

Leader: In the name of the Father, † and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: *Amen*

Leader: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you told Peter that we must forgive without limit:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you showed Peter the depth of God's mercy:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to the same depth and breadth of forgiveness:

Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer

O God most high,
you are slow to anger and rich in compassion.
Keep alive in us the memory of your mercy,
that our angers may be calmed and our resentments dispelled.
May we discover the forgiveness that is promised
to all those who forgive. May we become a people rich in mercy.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and
reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.
Let the church say – Amen.

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 13 2020

1st Reading – Sirach 27:30-28:7

³⁰ Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight.

¹ The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail.

² Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.

³ Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the LORD?

⁴ Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?

⁵ If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins?

⁶ Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin!

⁷ Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul;^[L]
and all my being, bless his holy name.^[SEP]

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,^[L]
and forget not all his benefits.^[SEP]

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

³ He pardons all your iniquities,^[L]
heals all your ills.^[SEP]

⁴ He redeems your life from destruction,^[L]
crowns you with kindness and compassion.^[SEP]

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

⁹ He will not always chide,^[L]
nor does he keep his wrath forever.^[SEP]

¹⁰ Not according to our sins does he deal with us,^[L]
nor does he requite us according to our crimes.^[SEP]

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,^[L] so surpassing is his
kindness toward those who fear him.^[SEP]

¹² As far as the east is from the west,^[L]
so far has he put our transgressions from us.^[SEP]

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

2nd Reading – Romans 14:7-9

Brothers and sisters:^[SEP]^[L]7 None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself.⁸ For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.⁹ For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The Word of the Lord.....Thanks be to God.

Alleluia – John 13:34

R. Alleluia, alleluia.^[SEP]^[L]

³⁴ I give you a new commandment, says the Lord;^[SEP]^[L]
love one another as I have loved you.^[SEP]^[L]

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel – Matthew 18:21-35

²¹ Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?”²² Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

²³ That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

²⁴ When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

²⁵ Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold,^[SEP]^[L] along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt.

²⁶ At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’

²⁷ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.²⁸ When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’²⁹ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’³⁰ But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt.

³¹ Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair.³² His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me

to.³³ Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’

³⁴ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

³⁵ So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.”

The Gospel of the Lord...Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection Prompts:

Before you begin, listen to "My Life is in Your Hggands" by Kirk Franklin sung by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AS6tQYJVO80>

“Moved with compassion” is how the master of the household reacted to the first servant’s plea to be forgiven the impossible debt. In the Greek text, the word is “splanchnizomai” – which means his you are moved so deeply by something that you feel it in the pit of your stomach. The same word is used by Jesus in the Prodigal Son parable in Luke.

- Have you been in a situation where you were moved bodily with compassion for another person’s situation?
- Where did you “go” with that feeling?
- What has been your most memorable experience of being forgiven?

Meditation Prompts:

Silently ask yourself if there is someone or something that you find especially hard to forgive? Ponder why.

- Pray for the ability to forgive whatever seems unforgivable.
- Pray for the wisdom to know when to leave an abusive situation when offers of forgiveness are not matched by repentance by the perpetrator.

Then behold “I Know Something About God's Grace” sung by W. Clifford Petty: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-cctseKXQs> and then move into this week’s intercessions.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – September 13, 2020
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Presider: Let us pray for all those who need to forgive or to be forgiven.

Worship Leader

1. For the church, that it may be a model of true healing and reconciliation. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.** (ASSEMBLY RESPONDS: **Forgive us, O God.**)
2. For the resolution of conflicts among the world's nations; and for those who mediate these conflicts. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
3. For those unwilling to reconcile with others, and for those who do not know how. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
4. For people of Good Will to step up and commit to undoing racism and white supremacy. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
5. For those living with the prospect or reality of homelessness, that they secure a place to live. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
6. For those who live in an urban food desert, that nourishing food become available to them. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
7. For leaders in education, public health and government that they make wise choices. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
8. For all our loved ones in the military and their families, that they be returned to us safely and experience a welcoming community. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
9. For all those who work in health care and all frontline essential occupations, that they be protected. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**

10. For Kenneth W. Louis, our beloved director of liturgy and music, who celebrates his birthday this weekend, that he continue to heal and be restored to us soon. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
11. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those listed in our bulletin, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
12. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Martin Fru Akor and Jacinta Lemuel Bender for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**
13. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Forgive us, O God.**

Presider: O God, through Jesus you have shown us that forgiveness has no bounds. Give us the humility to ask for forgiveness when we have injured others, and the generosity to forgive those who may have hurt us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. LET THE CHURCH SAY – AMEN!

Sing or recite "The Lord's Prayer."

Experience "There Is No Way" Rev. Milton Brunson & Thompson Community Singers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdYZMZdDG84>

Closing Prayer

**Undaunted you seek the lost, O God,
exultant you bring home the found.
Touch our hearts with grateful wonder
for the tenderness of your forbearing love.
Grant us delight in the mercy that has found us
and bring all to rejoice at the feast of forgiveness.**

**We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever.**

Let the church say – Amen.

Reprise: Sing along with “Walk Together Children, Don't Get Weary” sung by the Mount of Olives Church Choir, Naalya, Uganda
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1iEActC1dc>