

Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year A - 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A resource for personal, family
and community prayer.

“...forgive your brother from your heart.”

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

²¹Peter went up to Jesus and said, “Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?”

²²Jesus answered, “Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.

²³And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. ²⁴When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; ²⁵but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt.

²⁶At this, the servant threw himself down at

You are invited to read the
Gospel passage attentively,
respectfully and reverently
as a gift of God.



the master's feet. 'Give me time,' he said, 'and I will pay the whole sum.' ²⁷And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.

²⁸Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. 'Pay what you owe me,' he said.

²⁹His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, 'Give me time and I will

For more information check out <https://lectio.newrydominican.com> which includes this week's Sunday Gospel podcast Living the Word - Meditate on the Way. Also available on all other podcast platforms.

028 3026 2178 | lectiocentre35@gmail.com

pay you.’

³⁰But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. ³¹His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him.

³²Then the master sent for him. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. ³³Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?’ ³⁴And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.

³⁵And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.”

Reading

Today’s passage follows immediately on from last week’s Gospel that dealt with handling disputes. The context here is the same: Jesus is preparing his disciples for their mission ahead. There are two sections to this passage. In the first, Peter hopes to set some limits to the call to forgive by asking “how often?” must he forgive someone who wrongs him. In the second section, the parable of the unmerciful servant, Jesus uncovers once more the truth of the sheer gift of God’s forgiveness and how anyone who has genuinely experienced it feels compelled to extend it to others. When the person who receives such gracious forgiveness cannot find it in their heart to forgive in turn, God is ‘angry’ and warns of the ‘imprisonment’ and ‘misery’ that follow for those who fail to forgive. Even in such circumstances God, as revealed in

Jesus, never tires of loving and forgiving such a person.

We are invited to remember and celebrate the times when generous mercy and love have been shown to us and we responded by extending the same to others. We remember, too, the times when we withheld that forgiveness from others - choosing, instead, to remain in a prison of resentment and bitterness.

Recognising

You are invited to meditate on the passage, or any part of it, by letting it speak to your life experience until you feel to say “I recognise this passage.”

v22. “not seven times but seventy-seven times” – a life-time’s work?

Can you remember suffering ‘a terrible wrong’ and, while you thought you had forgiven it, the old resentment seemed to surface again and again and you found that you had to make the journey of forgiving over and over again?

v26. “The servant’s Master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.”

Did you ever have the experience of knowing you were in the wrong and meriting the painful consequences of your actions? Undeservedly you were humbled to be shown a forgiveness that set your heart totally free?

v30. “he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the whole debt.”

Did you ever have the experience of being badly let down and desiring to make the oth-

er suffer as much as possible, giving you some feeling of satisfaction that you were getting your own back?

v33. “were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?”

Did you ever have the experience of feeling like a hypocrite because you knew you had received deep forgiveness in your own life and yet you found it very difficult to show that same forgiveness to others who had hurt you or your family?

v34. “he handed him over to the torturers until he should pay the whole debt.”

- Can you remember a time when you felt imprisoned and “tortured” by resentment and bitterness because you were unable to forgive someone from the heart?

- Can you remember the experience of liberation, when, by the grace of God, you were finally able to let go of that hurt and bitterness and began to move on in your life?

Responding

Having recognised God’s presence in life, you are invited to **respond** in your own words, in prayer (thanksgiving, repentance and petition).

Thank you, Father, for the times I have experienced the truth of your forgiveness in the sacrament of reconciliation. Trusting in your gracious mercy and love, I expressed sorrow and confessed my sins and, in the words of absolution, my heart was set free and I was intent on extending that mercy and love to others.

I ask your forgiveness, Father, for the times I have misrepresented your forgiveness by reducing it to human standards and adding my own conditions.

Help us, Father, to extend to others the gracious forgiveness that you have shown to us, and to be patient with others as you have been patient with us. Deepen our appreciation and gratitude for mercy so that we, in turn, might be bearers of that same forgiveness to our brothers and sisters, lest we will continue to be “tortured” by resentment and bitterness in the prison of unforgiveness.

Resting

You are invited to enter deep prayer by simply **resting** your heart in God’s presence (Contemplative moment). The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage might help you on this journey into greater silence and stillness, e.g. “**Be patient with me**”.

Reflecting

From your journey with this passage, you are now invited to **reflect**, and put into your own words, any new insights or understanding that you have received (Wisdom moment).

From your journey with this passage what have you learnt about the meaning of reconciliation... or healing... or restoration?

The only genuine response to the gift of forgiveness is to extend to others what has been given to you.



Children

Reading

Jesus wants his friends to be people who forgive. He wants people to never grow tired of forgiving others. He tells Peter that forgiveness cannot be limited to a certain number of times but that people must be prepared to forgive over and over again.

Recognising

Can you remember a time when you were losing patience with someone, maybe a brother or sister, who kept hurting you and you didn't want to forgive them again?

Can you remember meeting a 'Jesus' person who could always forgive you no matter how many times you hurt them or others, perhaps a parent or grandparent?

Responding

Father, I thank You for the experience of forgiveness in my life, for the people who have given me a second chance over and over again, and for the times that I was able to forgive.

Father, I ask forgiveness for the times that I couldn't go the extra mile to forgive others, for the grudges that I have held and for the hurt that I have caused.

Father, I ask for the grace to be able to forgive with a heart full of free flowing love so that I may build up Your kingdom on earth one word or act of forgiveness at a time.

Resting

Rest in the merciful embrace of the Father by repeating "FORGIVE FROM YOUR HEART" for as long as it is possible. May your heart be filled with the grace of forgiveness as you are drawn deeper into the Father's presence.

Reflecting

Now is always the time to give someone another chance by rising above their wrongdoings and extending the hand of forgiveness over and over again.

A simple summary of Lectio steps can be found in the porch of the church.