

Read

Sirach 27:30–28:7

Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4,
9–10, 11–12

Romans 14:7–9

Matthew 18:21–35

LIVING THE WORD

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 13, 2020



REFLECTION

Jesus' response to Peter's question about how often we should forgive someone is not a literal answer. What would happen when we get to the seventy-eighth time someone asks for forgiveness? Jesus would not turn them away. Rather, Jesus uses this to illustrate how much we should forgive those who hurt us: we are to forgive till we get tired of counting! In the parable Jesus tells, the servant asks for the master to be patient with him. We must be patient with others and with ourselves when it comes to forgiveness. At times, we can become frustrated with ourselves for falling back into sinful habits, even after going to Reconciliation. However, God is just and merciful. When we approach him with humble hearts, he will support us and help us to return to him. Likewise, we should be patient with others when they come to us asking for forgiveness.



ACTION

We need patience throughout our daily lives, and not just when someone needs forgiveness. Think back over the past week and make a list of three or four times when you lost your patience or been irritated or frustrated by someone else's actions. For each time, come up with one or two strategies to be more patient. Put them into practice this week when you encounter similar situations. Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so don't forget to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in those tough moments!

*"To forgive takes love,
to forget takes humility."*

—Mother Teresa



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How has God shown you patience and forgiveness in the past month?
- ❖ Is there someone you need to forgive in your life right now? How can you do this?



September 13, 2020

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #130A

Sirach 27:30–28:7

Psalms 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12

Romans 14:7–9

Matthew 18:21–35

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In this week's Gospel, Jesus uses a parable to emphasize the importance of forgiveness. By saying that we must forgive seventy-seven times, Jesus shows us that we should be open to forgiving others, even when we have already done so for a similar offense. We ourselves experience forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a sacrament that we can celebrate more than once and often, if needed. Jesus teaches us to forgive as God forgives us, abundantly and without conditions.

Q FOCUS: *We are forgiven by God and, in turn, extend that forgiveness to others.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross is celebrated on September 14. On this day, we honor the cross of Christ, which symbolizes our salvation through Christ's death and Resurrection. This feast began as a commemoration of the event of St. Helena finding relics of the True Cross on which Christ was crucified. St. Helena was the mother of the emperor Constantine, who changed the law so that Christians could worship without fear of persecution in the Roman Empire. St. Helena had gone to the Holy Land to discover relics and sites of Christ's suffering, death, and Resurrection and honor them by building churches. The cross is probably the most recognized

and utilized symbol of Christianity and we honor it on this feast day.

Church Teaching Connection

"Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father's love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. Every page of the Gospel is marked by this imperative of a love that loves to the point of forgiveness. . . . Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God's mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional. Mercy is always a gratuitous act of our heavenly Father, an unconditional and unmerited act of love" (*Misericordia et misera*, 2).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 18:21–35

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was

brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. 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.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

"Mom, Katie took my favorite sweater without asking!" "Dad, Timmy will not stop bugging me—I hate having a younger brother!" These are common phrases heard in homes all over the world. Siblings borrow things without asking, siblings annoy each other, and siblings tease and fight. Forgiveness is easy to teach, but it is difficult to practice forgiveness in our everyday lives at home and at school. We often

have a hard time forgiving those who hurt us, annoy us, and make us mad. Now, we hear Jesus tell us to forgive not just seven times but seventy-seven times! How overwhelming!

► **Is there a person in your life whom you feel as though you are always forgiving? How does it make you feel to have to constantly forgive this person? How does it affect your relationship with him or her?**

Jesus uses parables as a teaching tool in the Gospel. Parables are stories that teach a lesson or a moral. To help his listeners understand this deeper truth, Jesus uses images and situations that would be commonplace during the times in which he lived. In this parable, Jesus demonstrates how important forgiveness is. He also uses it to show that when we are forgiven, we are charged with extending that forgiveness that we received to others. In the parable, Jesus tells the story of a master who forgives a large debt that one of his servants owes to him. The master is about to sell the man and his family off, and the servant asks for mercy and forgiveness. The master is moved with compassion; his loving and merciful nature is inspired by his concern for the servant and his family.

► **In what instances have you been compassionate toward someone else?**

► **Do you feel as though compassion is a necessary ingredient to forgiveness? Why or why not?**

Compassion leads the master to forgive his servant. The servant receives this gift of forgiveness, which allows him and his family to remain free. However, the servant does not "pay it forward." When a fellow servant is unable to pay the first servant back a small debt, the first servant is angry and unforgiving. Instead of paying the forgiveness forward and sharing in the light of mercy, the first servant is not moved with compassion for his fellow servant. Jesus uses this story to show his disciples that forgiveness is an essential part of our faith; we must forgive others readily, for we receive the gift of forgiveness from God. We are called to share what God has given us. God does not tie strings to his mercy and forgiveness, and we are asked to do the same. This is challenging because we do not have the depth of divine mercy that God has, but through our prayers, we can

ask the Holy Spirit to help transform our attitudes to be more like those of Christ.

► Have there been times in your life when you have been unwilling to forgive someone who hurt you? What was the outcome?

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 26.

Forgiveness is an essential part of our Catholic faith. Jesus said that we must forgive others not seven times but seventy-seven times.

How have you experienced forgiveness in your life, forgiving others and being forgiven yourself?

We forgive and act with mercy because God has extended that grace to us. We are called to share God's love with others by being compassionate.

Act on the Word

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Before today's session, coordinate with your pastor so that he is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the teens during your session. Alternatively, you can share with the teens the parish Reconciliation schedule and encourage them to make time for it in the coming week.

Help the teens prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Keep in mind that some of them might not have celebrated the sacrament since their First Reconciliation years ago. Share with the teens the following information about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing. It centers on God's love, mercy, and forgiveness for us. We all make mistakes and need forgiveness throughout our life. Reconciliation is a sacred space where we can admit our wrongdoings, apologize, and vow to do better the next time. Through the ministry of the priest, we come to receive God's love and mercy no matter if this is our second, tenth, or even seventy-eighth time seeking God's forgiveness. God is

always willing to forgive us when we come to him with humble and contrite hearts.

As a sacrament of the Church, it also helps us to remember the communal effects our sin has. When we sin, we damage our relationships with God and other people. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we repair those relationships through God's mercy and forgiveness. This sacrament also helps repair the damaged relationships our sin causes with God, each other, and even ourselves.

If you are not celebrating the sacrament during this session, lead the teens in a discussion about Reconciliation in light of today's Gospel.

Closing Prayer

*God of mercy and forgiveness,
through your Son you have taught us that there
is no limit to forgiveness.
May we forgive all who have wronged us,
just as you have forgiven us.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.