

Read

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9,
12-13, 22-23

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10,
12-13

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-38

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time February 23, 2025



REFLECTION

Have you ever felt so angry with a person who mistreated you that you just want to get back at them? Jesus challenges us today with a message that is at the heart of God's identity: he wants us to be merciful like his heavenly Father.

Mercy is when you have the power to do harm or exact repayment, but you choose to act with kindness and compassion instead. This is an essential part of who God is and how he acts toward us. Because of his great love for us, God treats us with mercy. Mercy gives our relationship with God a chance to continue, to grow, and to become better. From the very beginning, God revealed his mercy to his people and never gave up on them. This is God's way, and he invites us to live it too.

Jesus' words in today's Gospel give us examples of how to live out that mercy in our daily lives. It isn't easy, especially when we feel so angry or hurt. When those feelings arise, remember that God looks at each of us with love and acts from a place of mercy. Take a deep breath and pray that you might be merciful like him.



ACTION

An ancient prayer that is beloved by the Orthodox Christian tradition and prayed around the world is the Jesus Prayer. It is a simple prayer that can be repeated like the Hail Mary, or in a variety of other ways. In this prayer you simply say, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Whenever you feel frustrated with someone this week, take a moment to close your eyes, breathe deeply, and pray this prayer. Then act toward that person with the same mercy that God extends to you.



**Learn a little bit more
about the Jesus Prayer with this
short blog: <https://ltp.org/s/jesus-prayer>**

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who is a person in your life that you could extend mercy to?
- ❖ How have you experienced God's mercy in your own life?



February 23, 2025

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #81C

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Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-38

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

Today's reading continues Luke's Sermon on the Plain. After Jesus taught the disciples about the Beatitudes, he then instructs them to love their enemies. These are hard words to hear, and this call to disciples might have made the crowd uncomfortable, as we might be today hearing Jesus' words. The teens are called to adjust their behavior and attitude in light of God's unending mercy. We are to love as God loves and be merciful as he is merciful. These words of Jesus might be familiar to us. They are the challenge of discipleship: love your enemies, do good to others, give to everyone who asks of you, stop judging lest you be judged. It is only when we love as God does that we are responding fully to the call of discipleship

Q FOCUS: *We are called to love and be merciful as God loves and is merciful.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On February 27, we celebrate the life of the tenth-century Armenian monk and mystic, St. Gregory of Narek. Pope Francis named Gregory a Doctor of the Church in 2015, in recognition of the great theological and spiritual contributions he made to the faith. Gregory has been honored as a saint in the Armenian Apostolic Church since the twelfth century. He was a philosopher, poet, theologian, writer, and composer. His *Book of Lamentations* (not to be confused with the book of the Bible that has

the same name) is considered to be a masterpiece of Armenian literature. It is a series of prayers and reflections on God's abundant love and mercy.

Church Teaching Connection

"Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love and 'thereby confers infinite dignity' upon all humanity. We likewise believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love. If we go to the ultimate source of that love which is the very life of the triune God, we encounter in the community of the three divine Persons the origin and perfect model of all life in society" (Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, 85).

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

Luke 6:27-38

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

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from

the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

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:

Today's Gospel reading is a continuation of the Sermon on the Plain from last week. After sharing the Beatitudes, which turned our worldview into a kingdom-view, Jesus now gives a radical call to discipleship. He tells us to love our enemies. Those who follow him should choose love in every situation. He makes a striking point: “Even sinners love those who love them.” The challenge for disciples is that they must love even those who don't love them. Jesus calls us to be more like God, who loves far beyond anything we can imagine.

► Without naming names, think about who in your life is easy to love. Who presents more of a challenge to love? Share some of your thoughts about how it might be possible to love both equally.

► What does it mean to do good to those who hate you?

Discipleship is hard work. It calls us to constantly reevaluate our relationships with people and to do good to those with whom we are in conflict. Jesus' teaching shows us that the path of discipleship is not the same as the world's way of life. Conventional wisdom is turned upside down. We are called to love those we don't like, those whom we find difficult to like, and even those who have done us harm.

When we love as God loves, we have room for both our friends and enemies in our hearts. This radical vision of love on the path of discipleship leads us to forgiveness. Jesus tells us, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Just as God shows mercy to us when he forgives us, we must extend this mercy to others. Therefore, we are not only called to love our enemies, but to forgive them as well.

► How can we forgive those who have caused destruction, wars, and violence in the world and in our lives? Is it possible to truly forgive them?

We have to allow the hate and anger caused by our enemies to be washed away by God's love. We have to make the personal choice to love and forgive them, which we can only do with God's help. This does not mean that we have to understand the choices of our enemies or that justice cannot or should not happen. It does not mean that we ignore victims or leave them to fend for themselves. It does not mean that we allow people to continue to harm others. Rather, Pope Francis reminds us in *Fratelli tutti* that “forgiveness does not forbid [justice] but actually demands it” (241). When we love like God loves, and forgive as he forgives, we are opening ourselves to allow God to work in our lives. We show our love by ensuring others are not harmed and that the person who has harmed someone is helped so that he or she can regain a right relationship with God.

When we commit to be disciples of Jesus, we make a personal and spiritual choice not to be swayed by the hate in the world. Rather, in every

moment, we choose the path of God, the path of love and mercy. It is the only path for those who wish to live as Jesus did. And we can only do it with his help.

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 144.

Jesus challenges us to love our enemies.

To be disciples of Jesus, we must do the work of love and mercy.

When we forgive others, we are choosing to love as God loves.

Act on the Word

Change Our Hearts

For this activity, you will need a recording of the song "Change Our Hearts" by Rory Cooney and a device to play music, paper, a whiteboard, and writing utensils.

In the Gospel today, Jesus asks us to love our enemies. As a large group, ask the teens to share who they believe is their enemy. For instance, it could be countries that start a war, terrorists, those who gossip about them, or someone that is mean to them (do not use specific names, keep these general). Create a list on the board of these "enemies." Then listen to the song "Change Our Hearts" by Rory Cooney. The song's lyrics offer a prayer to God, asking that he change our hearts and minds so that we might turn toward him and follow his will.

ii Divide the large group into smaller groups and give each group a part of the list of enemies that you have compiled. Ask the groups to discuss how they could change their hearts and minds to both love and forgive these particular enemies. When they are done, gather back as a large group to share the ideas the small groups came up with. Was there an enemy that they could not love or forgive? Was it easier to forgive the enemy that was close to them, or far away? Invite the teens to bring their reflections to prayer as you play the song one more time.

Closing Prayer

Reconciling God,

you have shown us your wisdom, love,
and mercy.

Mold us into your likeness

so that we may be imitators of you
in our daily lives.

Through Christ our Lord.

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.