

## Homily Notes for Sunday, Sept 17, 2017, 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary A

Readings: Sirach 27:30-28:7, Psalm 103, Romans 14:7-9, Matthew 18:21-35

Theme – Forgiveness; forgiving others because God has forgiven us so much.

**1. Summary: We are obligated as Christians, who have received forgiveness from God because of the blood of Jesus, to forgive others, even our enemies.**

### Commentary on the Readings:

**2. Sirach:** Note how this anticipates almost exactly that which Jesus says in and following the Lord's Prayer. Consider how Ben Sirach highlights the consequences of bad or evil behavior!

v. 30 – the one who will not forgive holds on to wrath and anger.

v. 1 – the one who will not forgive remains vengeful and will receive vengeance from the Lord.

v. 2 – the one who will not forgive the sins of the neighbor will not have his sins forgiven by the Lord.

v. 3 – can those who nourish anger against others expect healing from God?

v. 4 – can those who refuse mercy to others, seek pardon for his sins before God?

v. 5 – can we who are human and who cherish wrath expect to be forgiven?

**3. Romans:** We are called to live for one another. This requires an attitude of forgiveness, we being the sinful individuals that we are.

**4. Gospel – Matthew:** Jesus effectively says we are to forgive infinitely.

The king represents God and the great debt represents our sins before God.

Note the compassion of God. The debtor only asked for time. God pardoned him.

But if we do not forgive the much lesser sins against us..... God will revisit us and take away the pardon he has granted. Why are the sins against us lesser than our sins before God?

This parable reminds us that there will be a judgment: "The beginning of judgment will be with the household of God (1 Pet 4:17).

What a great injustice: "But how the Lord forgave him ten thousand talents, and how he would not forgive his fellow servant a hundred pence has no explanation in the Church nor should any be accepted by prudent men" (St Jerome).

### 5. Basic passages on forgiveness:

**Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Luke 17:3; Matthew 5:43-48 (love of enemies),**

Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer we say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." And then Jesus says immediately, "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

**6. Can you find anywhere in the Bible where it says that you must forgive, but if the sin is really bad, you don't have to forgive?** Surely God must understand that this is an exception to the rule? There are legitimate exceptions to God's laws, but not based on failing or refusing to forgive someone.

### 7. Matthew 26:28 – how the Eucharist is offered primarily for the forgiveness of sins.

How important is it to know what is sinful and get rid of it if this is the purpose of the Eucharist?

Luke 17:3 and Luke 24:47 – Luke more likely connects repentance with the forgiveness of sins.

See 1 Cor 11:27-29 for how we must examine ourselves and repent before receiving the Eucharist.

**8. Basic Question: Do I need to forgive those who aren't sorry for what they have done, for those who have neither repented nor felt contrition.** Yes, I do. See the example of Jesus on the Cross and St Stephen when he was stoned to death. They had a forgiving heart, but the people killing them could not receive the forgiveness.

### 9. Is there any case when I don't have to forgive and God approves? Some guidelines:

1. I cannot forgive and continue to hold a grudge.

2. When I forgive, I should stay in relation to accompany or help the person.
3. When I forgive, I cannot then behave in a way that would tear down the community (bad words).
4. When I forgive, I must wish the best for this person and their situation.
5. To forgive someone does not mean that they should not receive punishment.
6. To forgive someone does not mean that they should not be corrected (See Matt 18:15-18. See homily from last week).

**10. When I forgive I am not saying:**

That what was done was o.k.

That it should not be punished or the person go to jail (although you might should visit the person).

That it should not be corrected.

Note that it is right to be punished but it is not right not to forgive.

**11. What should be our response to Muslims who seek to destroy us? Response to 9/11/2001.**

We must have a forgiving heart. This does not mean that we should not protect ourselves, defend ourselves, or seek to punish evil-doers. But we should hope in our hearts that we finally might be reconciled.

**12. The example of St Maria Goeretti** on her being assaulted and stabbed to death at about age twelve by an acquaintance, Allesandro. She forgave him from her deathbed. Her mother forgave him. Later she appeared to him in prison and repeated her forgiveness. He was then healed spiritually. When released he repented publicly of his evil deed before the local parish community at Christmas Mass. He then traveled with Maria's mother, promoting her sanctity and cause. He and her mother were present together at the Vatican when St. Maria Goeretti was canonized.

**13. What does this teach us about forgiveness and working together as a community?** What kind of attitudes and what kind of behavior should we have as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

14. Let us remember that the attitude you have in your mind when you die is the attitude that you will have when you wake up on the other side!

15. What kind of behavioral changes is God desiring of me in this Mass in order to become **the-better-version-of-myself** that he wants me to be?

**16. Application questions:**

1. While we know that God wants us to forgive, are there some sins so serious that they cannot be forgiven, and I don't have to forgive them and remain right with God.
2. For example, can we say, I know that God hates divorce and adultery, but in my case it is just too overwhelming to forgive?
3. Can you make a list of situations where the wrong or the evil done was so serious that God's law of forgiveness does not apply.
4. Situation: Marvin became angry at Juniper one day, because in a game of basketball Juniper was unnecessarily rough and kicked Marvin several times in the shins. When Marvin came home that afternoon, he told his mother about the incident, and exclaimed angrily: "Juniper played a mean trick on me, and I won't forgive him until I have a chance to get even with him." His mother made no answer to this remark, but that night, as Marvin was about to go to bed, she remarked gently: "When you say your night prayers, I don't see how you can honestly say all that is contained in the Our Father." To what words of the Our Father do you think Marvin's mother was referring? How could he have disposed his soul so that he could have said those words honestly and sincerely?
5. Why does the failure to forgive cause much of the homelessness we experience in our culture? As a pastor and a former social worker, I believe this is a major cause of homelessness.