

24th Sunday of the Year - A

Sir 27:30-28:7; Rom 14:7-9; Mt 18:21-35

‘No human relationship is ever possible without forgiveness’.

‘Successful married life is the union of two great forgivers’.

Our readings for today is concern with forgiving of our offenders and getting reconciled with them. All the three readings of today remind us of the path to forgiveness, mercy and reconciliation and challenge us to walk in this way of Life.

Ps 103 says, “*God is kind and merciful, slow to anger and rich in compassion*”. Paul tells us that we have to forgive others because we belong to Christ who taught us by his own example in forgiving those who killed Him. Since we got to relate with one another as brothers and sisters of Jesus, we are in the family of God, so hatred and bitterness should have no place in our hearts. In today’s Gospel, through the parable of the two debtors, Jesus teaches us that there should be no limit to our forgiveness and no conditions attached to our reconciliation. We represent the greater debtor in the parable because we commit sins every day so we need God’s forgiveness every day. But we must forgive in order to be forgiven.

We need to forgive, forget and be reconciled: In the light of eternity and considering the shortness of our span of life, holding on to the old grudges is pointless. Our ability to forgive is the measure of the depth of our Christianity. The forgiveness that we offer others is essential which makes it possible for us to receive God’s forgiveness and to pray meaningfully: “*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” Let us remember St. Francis of Assisi’s prayer: “It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.” Our failure to offer pardon means that we have forgotten God’s goodness or have not fully appreciated the unconditional forgiveness we have received from Him. What God expects from us is limitless forgiving and an ability to overlook faults and to keep on loving even in the face of insults.

We may never forget the hurt we have experienced but we can choose to forgive and pray for our offenders. As life goes on and we remember an incident that was hurtful and caused great anger, we need to remind ourselves that, with God’s grace, we have already forgiven the one who hurt us. Time heals our memories. Forgiveness finally changes us from being prisoners of our

past to being liberated and at peace with our memories. Forgiveness allows us to move beyond the pain, the hatred, and the anger. When we forgive we make the choice that heals. We can forgive the offender by wishing him God's blessings and by offering that individual to God by simply saying, "Help me to mend our relationship." When we withhold forgiveness, we remain the victim. When we offer forgiveness, we are doing it also for our own well-being. Forgiveness allows us to move beyond the pain, the hatred, and the anger. We always have a choice: to forgive or not to forgive. When we forgive we make the choice that heals.

Sirach reminds his listeners that if they don't lay aside anger, forgive and show mercy to an offender they can't expect to receive forgiveness and mercy when they face God. This teacher of wisdom tells us how to avoid Divine revenge. God treats us the way we treat each other.

We got to relate with one another as brothers and sisters of Jesus, as members of God's family, so hatred and bitterness should have no room in our hearts. *"No one of us lives for oneself," the Apostle writes, "and no one dies for oneself. 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."*

Peter asked Jesus how often he ought to forgive his brother, Jesus' answer was that he must forgive "seventy times seven times." In other words, there is no limit to forgiveness.

God cannot be reconciled with the sinner who chooses to stay in sin, nor can the Christian community fully incorporate a member who refuses reconciliation and the healing of the behaviors that offend against truth and love. With God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, forgiveness is available to the individual Christian, but along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we must seek a mutual healing of wounds and a real change of mind and evil behavior.

‘We are like beasts when we kill; we are like men when we judge;

We are like God when we forgive’.

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