

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

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, how often should I forgive my brother or sister if they sin against me? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

*"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?**" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*

Should you not have had mercy on others, as I had mercy on you?

We all have been hurt by the words, the actions or the inactions of another.

What usually happens first?

Self-pity walks in and wants to stay!

Once self-pity moves in,

usually bitterness, resentment and anger follow right behind.

The memory of the wrong flows inward,
where we can choose to hold it,
sometimes for years and years.

Holding a grudge is like holding toxic waste.
It only hurts the one holding it.
It poisons our spirit and destroys OUR CAPACITY TO LOVE.

So from time to time, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation,
and counselling if necessary,
self-pity has to be cleaned out, along with bitterness and resentment.

Then we can experience a sense of freedom, and healing.

We then can devote our energy in a positive way, TO LOVE.
As followers of Christ, we are to be imitators of Jesus.

So how many times should we forgive the person who wrongs us?
Jesus says seventy-seven times seven.

What Jesus is saying is, in effect,
“you have to forgive over and over and over and over and over again.”
Your mercy has to be like God's mercy, an exorbitant mercy,
a mercy that forgives over and over and over again.
It's a shockingly gratuitous number of times of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is primarily a healing of our own hearts.

Forgiveness implies an understanding of our poverty, brokenness
and our own need of true humility.

In most situations, if we look deeply inside of ourselves,
maybe, just maybe,
we may have been at least partly to blame for what happened.

And it's not good enough to forgive in word.

We must forgive, as the Gospel says, from the HEART.

It's not a question of if and when the offender repents

– that would be relatively easy.

HERE'S THE REALLY HARD PART...

– We are expected to forgive

EVEN IF THE OFFENDER DOESN'T REPENT.

That's why we need God's grace.

With God's grace, we can forgive others.

Forgiveness clears a path for God to forgive us.

Should you not have had mercy on others, as I had mercy on you?

The only obstacle we can put in the way

of God's forgiveness of our sins,

is our inability to forgive the sins of others.

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO FORGIVE;

THEY SHALL OBTAIN FORGIVENESS FOR THEIR OWN SINS.