



24th Sunday Ord. Time Yr A

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Our text follows on directly from last Sunday's Gospel. Jesus is moving to his Cross which will bring salvation through God's forgiveness. Those who follow him (i.e. have faith in Jesus) are challenged to be forgiving as Jesus is forgiving. The first step in being forgiving requires mutual listening to each other. When we strive to do this, the Lord will be there with us to help us (consider the last words of last Sunday's Gospel). But, are we convinced that we can face the challenges to be forgiving, not just to forgive once, but continually – as God continually offers us forgiveness. Our text begins with Peter expressing this concern with his question: “.. *how often must I forgive my brother..?*”; this leads into the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. This text concludes Jesus' teaching on forgiveness (i.e. Ch. 18). It began with the question: “Who is the greatest?” Greatness is characterised by the readiness to forgive. If we are listening, it is clear that we must be forgiving to be a follower of Jesus.

Note: A 'talent' was a huge amount of money. It is reckoned that one talent is worth 100 denarii. So, 10,000 talents to 100 denarii is a ratio of **10,000:1**. One denarius was a day's pay.

In this part of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is clarifying his teachings as he goes to the Cross. He responds to questions or to those who approach him on his journey. We will skip Ch. 19 and take up at Ch. 20 for next Sunday's Gospel. Ch 19 has Jesus explaining about his teaching about divorce in response to a question from the Pharisees. It also has Jesus approached by the Rich Young Man. Jesus takes the opportunity to teach how we need to be detached from wealth to be his true follower.

Read: **Matthew 18: 21 – 35**

Meditatio: How hard is it for me to forgive? Do I put limits on forgiveness? Have I forgiven a person more than once? Do I hold grudges against those who have hurt me? Do I truly forgive those who have hurt me or is it 'just a show'? Am I holding back on forgiving because I can't risk being let down and/or hurt again? 'Settling accounts', does that frighten me, do I have something to hide? What should I 'sort out' so it does not 'get out of hand'? Have I had to ask for mercy or forgiveness? Have I been brave enough to own up to my own wrongdoing? Have I made commitments that I have had no intention to live up to? Do I 'nit-pick' but do not make important changes in my own life? How much time do I have to sort things out? Have I experienced the gift of forgiveness? Have I experienced a 'new freedom' after celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation? Do I trust that I can be forgiven, even for very serious sin? Am I afraid to admit my sin and ask forgiveness in Reconciliation? Have I the courage to speak up against injustice and wrongdoing? Do I understand how my sin offends “*the infinite goodness of God*” as in the Act of Contrition Prayer*? Do I ignore the 'slippery slide' that comes with sinning; sin can take over and, in its most extreme, lead to eternal damnation? Jesus died on the cross* for forgiveness of our sins; how do I sin when my sins add to the sufferings of Jesus' crucifixion? Do I detest sin*? Do I use sin to get an advantage? Have I compassion for those who 'owe me'? When I forgive, is it 'from my heart'? Do I accept forgiveness and try not to sin again*?

Oratio: Pray in thanks that God forgives and forgets (i.e. truly from his heart). Pray for those who do wrong secretly, especially those tempted to embezzle. Pray for honesty in financial dealings. Pray that 'doing business' will not excuse sinning. Pray for judges. Pray for prisoners that they may find a way to reform their lives. Pray for those who serve in prisons. Pray that we will be faithful to our commitments. Pray for forgiveness from the heart. Pray for renewal in the celebration and understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer — Pray the Act of Contrition* and reflect on how forgiving you are.

✍ Fr Joe

Matthew 18: 21 – 35

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt.

At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet, "Give me time," he said, "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt.

Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me," he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt.

His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him.

Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt.

And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

***Act of Contrition:**

O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins and detest them above all evil because they have crucified my loving Saviour Jesus Christ and most of all because they offend thy infinite goodness and, I firmly resolve, by the help of your grace, that I will try not to sin again and to carefully avoid the occasion of sin, through Christ our Lord. Amen.