

AMDG
24TH SUNDAY IN
ORDINARY TIME
YEAR A
17TH SEPTEMBER 2017



The Lord is Compassion and Love

OPENING PRAYER

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.

Our faith is based on a living covenant with the God of compassion and love. Christ invites us to be drawn deeper into the flow of this eternal covenant of love.

The *first reading* from the book of Ecclesiasticus urges us to let go of anger, hate and resentment. True forgiveness from our heart will set us free from these destructive urges.

Today's *psalm* is a song of thanks and celebration of God's healing love. God crowns us with a compassionate love that liberates us from fear and guilt.

St Paul, in his letter to the Romans (*second reading*), teaches us that as Christians, the life we live has a profound impact on others. We belong to the Lord both in life and in death.

The challenging parable on forgiveness in today's *Gospel* reminds us that God has an immense capacity to forgive us our sins. It is only if we choose not to forgive that we will cut ourselves off from the flow of compassion and love that comes from God.

In this coming week, let us pray for each other, that we might have the grace to be set free from anything that holds us back from fully embracing God's forgiveness.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 102 (103)

R./ The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion.

His wrath will come to an end;
he will not be angry for ever.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults.

For as the heavens are high above the earth
so strong is his love for those who fear him.
As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins.

I prepare to pray by allowing myself to become still.
Perhaps I follow the rhythm of my breathing ... the breath that gives me life
and fills my being.

I begin the psalm by slowly reading and repeating the response
with each in-breath I take, allowing these words to fill my mind:
The Lord is compassion and love.

With tender care, I slowly read the rest of the psalm,
pausing on a word or phrase to which I feel drawn.

This might bring to mind an image, emotion or memory.
I spend time with that moment, sharing my thoughts with God.

Perhaps I return again and again to the words of the response,
The Lord is compassion and love, or to other phrases from the psalm.

I pray these words like a mantra,
bringing me back to the Lord when my mind wanders.

When I feel ready, I thank God in my own words for the blessings in my life.
I bring my time of prayer to a close, saying *Glory be to the Father ...*

GOSPEL: 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 he 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.”

I read the Gospel through slowly.

How does this teaching on forgiveness make me feel?

What questions does it stir in me?

Are there times when I have struggled to forgive others?

Has someone found it hard to forgive me? I talk to God about this.

I read the Gospel again, and this time I imagine seeing Peter and Jesus talking like close friends. What do I notice?

Why does Jesus put so much importance on forgiveness?

How important is forgiveness and compassion in my life?

I talk to Jesus as I would to a close friend about this parable. I listen to what Jesus says to me. In time I finish my prayer, saying *Our Father* ...

Here's a text if you've only got a minute ...

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name!

Responsorial Psalm

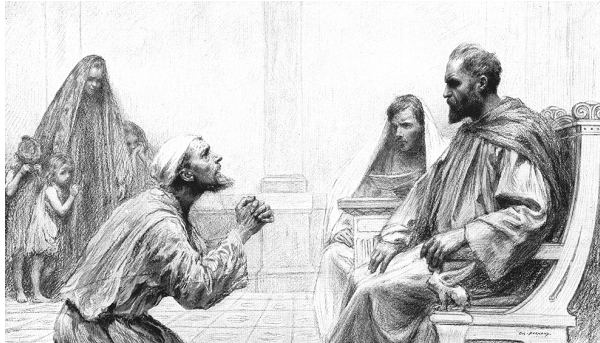
I give you a new commandment:
love one another, just as I have loved you.

Gospel acclamation

How precious is your mercy O God!
Your children seek shelter in the shadow of your wings.

Communion antiphon

*This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Ecclesiasticus 27:30 –28:7; Psalm 102 (103); Romans 14:7–9;
Matthew 18:21–35*



How does this image help me pray?



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
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JESUIT
Ministries



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