

Theme of the Week - You must forgive

Have you ever had to forgive someone when they have done something wrong to you? Sometimes it is hard to forgive others. In the Gospel, Jesus tells us that if we want God to forgive us then we must first learn to forgive each other.

Peter in the Gospel two weeks ago is rebuked by Jesus for not truly understanding what it means to follow him. In today's Gospel, Peter starts with a question in order to know what it takes to be a follower of Jesus. In this question Peter is trying to seek reassurance in what he must do (how many times must he forgive someone) in order to be a true follower of Christ. Many of us may have asked a similar question but for other things, examples being; if I am to follow Christ how many times should I pray? If I am to follow Christ how many times should I go to Mass? Peter asks this question 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Today in our lives we may ask something to our parents, friends or even to ourselves when we say 'why should I always have to forgive when they keep hurting me?'

From the first reading on Sunday, the words on forgiveness are underlined by the Gospel today, and the second reading on Sunday calls for our behaviour to be modified by our call as Christians. In the letter to the Romans (2nd Reading) St Paul says "if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord." Many of the things Jesus taught directly opposed the norms of behaviour of the day, and of human nature in general. Today's Gospel continues this call to rise above mediocrity. Forgiving someone seven times, as Peter was advocating, was a generous effort at mercy. But Jesus demands a higher standard for his followers, and illustrates it with this story of the unforgiving servant. The king forgives the impossibly enormous debt of one of his officials out of compassion, but the forgiven man refuses to match this treatment when dealing with the debt of another. He resorts to violence, and so loses the mercy that has previously been offered him. Notions of fairness are challenged as Jesus leads his listeners to the understanding that God's treatment of us correlates with our treatment of others. Forgiveness always sounds very holy and pious, but when it comes to being wronged ourselves we can find that our feelings get in the way. Can you recall a time when you have experienced this? How did you respond, and what happened? Were you able to forgive? When you consider this, think about how you forgive and experience forgiveness in school, your home, your community. Does this story help you to move past an initial response into a place where God's mercy can be manifest towards other people? During the week, work on

the things that need healing and reconciliation in your life and *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*; it's something we say most days - let's live it!

You must forgive

Weekly Reflections
17th September 2023



A reading from the Gospel of St 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.'

Prayer for the Week

Compassionate Father, in prayer I ask you for your forgiveness for my faults and transgressions. Instil within me the spirit of forgiveness to others, so through my own actions and words, I can truly live out the message of Christ in all I do.

Amen.

Day 1

Forgiveness can be a difficult thing to do, especially when someone has done us harm.

- Why do you think Jesus put such an importance on us to forgive one another before we are able to seek forgiveness from God?

Day 2

Peter puts a number in his question on how many times we should forgive before we have done enough in God's eyes.

- Why do you think he does this?
- Have there been times where you have done something similar?

Day 3

The act of forgiveness can be a really difficult thing to do. However in the Lord's Prayer we say '*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*'
What act of forgiveness can you show to another this week?



Feast Day - St Matthew the Apostle 21 September 2023

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector at Capernaum employed by the Romans when he was called to become an Apostle by Christ. In his own Gospel, Matthew describes the event pithily: "... [Jesus] saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at a receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Matthew likely continued to spread the word in the Holy Land after the Resurrection until the persecutions of Herod Agrippa (42 AD), and then evangelised in either Parthia, Persia, or Ethiopia.

Matthew the Apostle was:

Learned and Wise