

- So...Jesus says we have to forgive 7 times 70 times—only 490 times.?
- Jesus, is, of course, simply using metaphor...His real meaning being that there is to be no limit to the forgiveness we offer to others...which is only just and fair, because there is no limit to the forgiveness God offers to US.
- This Gospel is one I almost invariably send people to read when they're having trouble forgiving—Matthew 18, along with Matthew 6 just after Jesus gives us the Our Father, and He says: *"...if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matthew 6:14-15)...a principle St. Paul recalls when he writes: *"...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."* (Colossians 3:13)
- Most of the ways that we are sinned against are trivial, not to mention those offenses that are simply whipped up by our imagination—someone says something "mean", shorts us \$10, or doesn't give us the so-called respect that we think we are "due".
- These little pinpricks and slights fester and infect our whole soul... over virtually nothing.
- And yet...how much God has forgiven each of us...a multitude of even major sins racked up over many years and decades...simply by going to confession.

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- Because God is infinite, each sin we commit is an infinite offense against His pure holiness.
  - As an illustration, think about how shootings occur all the time...a terrible crime and sin, yes, but we scarcely take notice unless it touches our own circle of family and friends.
  - But we who are old enough remember when Pope John Paul was shot. Because of his office, it was an offense not only against him, but against the entire Church...and even the whole world. What a sickening feeling that was. And yet even he was just a man.

2017

- So imagine wounding the heart of God—each time an infinite offense. And when God’s heart is wounded, it wounds Heaven and earth, because goodness itself is wounded.
- Thus even the worst sin we can commit against each other is nothing compared to even what we think are “small” sins against God...because we sin again eternity.
- Yet, any sin against a person is also a sin against God...because we wound a child of God.
- If someone injures your child even slightly, your indignation and anger is almost boundless—the “mama bear” effect.
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- And yet...with just a few minutes in a sincere and good confession and the words of absolution from the priest, He forgives whatever wrong, whatever pain, whatever evil we’ve done.
- We cannot even imagine a more compassionate and loving God than that...one who loves so much that he suffered and died upon the cross so that we might be forgiven forever.

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- But there’s a caveat; in order to be forgiven, we must be willing to, and actually, forgive.
  - This is the message in our readings today. We cannot burn with cultivated hatred and vengeance and yet expect God to forgive US...for no matter how we are sinned against, our sins against God are worse.
  - As the book of Sirach told us today:
    - *Forgive your neighbor's injustice;  
then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.  
Could anyone nourish anger against another  
and expect healing from the LORD?  
Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself,  
can he seek pardon for his own sins?*
  - If we want Heaven, we MUST forgive. Again, “...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)...

2017

- Because...we pray every day: “...*forgive us OUR trespasses, AS WE FORGIVE THOSE who trespass against us.*”
- Forgiving others is NOT an option; it is a necessity for Heaven...to give as we have received from that immense treasury of God’s grace.
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- Indeed, in the afterlife we will wonder why we got so upset at the trivial little hurts and offenses we suffered here on earth, regardless of what they were.
- If in Heaven, we’ll ask ourselves: “*Why did I even bother about such insignificant slights? It was such an opportunity to be an example and reflect God’s own mercy.*”
- But...if in Hell...we will wail: “*How could I have been so stupid...so short-sighted...so petty?! Did I not hear God’s word...his command to forgive! Fool that I was! For pinpricks against pride I forfeited everlasting life...the eternal love of God!*”
- As Jesus says: “*Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful... forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you...For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.*” (Luke 6:36-38)

**Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**Lectionary: 130**

**Reading 1 Sir 27:30-28:7**

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Wrath and anger are hateful things,  
yet the sinner hugs them tight.

The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance,  
for he remembers their sins in detail.

Forgive your neighbor's injustice;  
then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.

Could anyone nourish anger against another  
and expect healing from the LORD?

Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself,  
can he seek pardon for his own sins?

If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath,  
who will forgive his sins?

Remember your last days, set enmity aside;  
remember death and decay, and cease from sin!

Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor;  
remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

**Responsorial Psalm Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12**

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R. (8) The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
and all my being, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

He pardons all your iniquities,  
heals all your ills.

redeems your life from destruction,  
he crowns you with kindness and compassion.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

He will not always chide,  
nor does he keep his wrath forever.

Not according to our sins does he deal with us,  
nor does he requite us according to our crimes.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he put our transgressions from us.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

**Reading 2 Rom 14:7-9**

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Brothers and sisters:

None of us lives for oneself, 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.

For this is why Christ died and came to life,  
that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

**Gospel Mt 18:21-35**

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Peter approached Jesus and asked him,

"Lord, if my brother sins against me,

how often must I forgive?

As many as seven times?"

Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king  
who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting,

a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount.

Since he had no way of paying it back,

his master ordered him to be sold,

along with his wife, his children, and all his property,

in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said,

'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.'

Moved with compassion the master of that servant

let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants

who owed him a much smaller amount.

He seized him and started to choke him, demanding,

'Pay back what you owe.'

Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him,

'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

But he refused.

Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison

until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened,

they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master

and reported the whole affair.

His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant!

I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to.

Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant,

as I had pity on you?'

Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers

until he should pay back the whole debt.

So will my heavenly Father do to you,

unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."