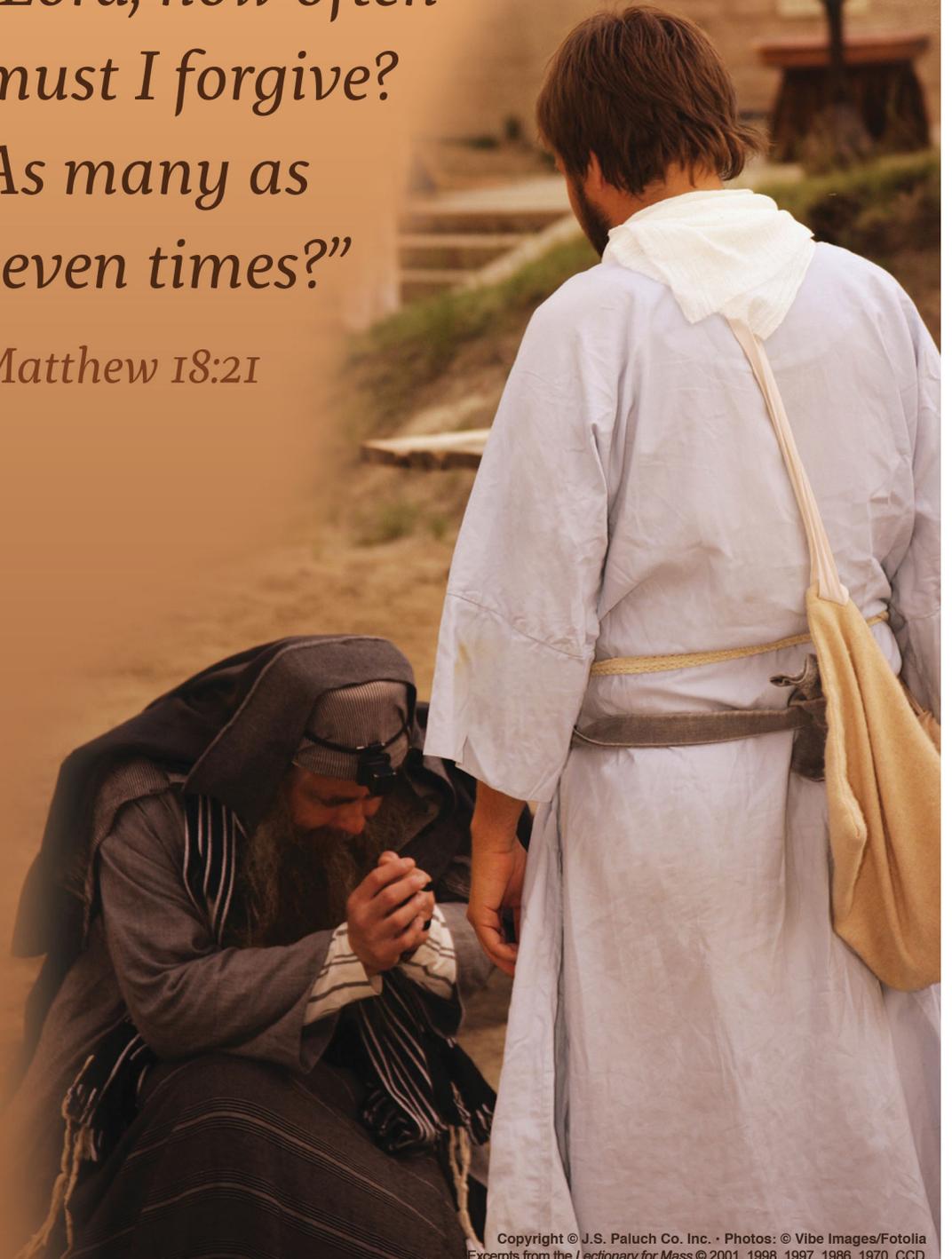


Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 13, 2020

Peter asked,
“Lord, how often
must I forgive?
As many as
seven times?”

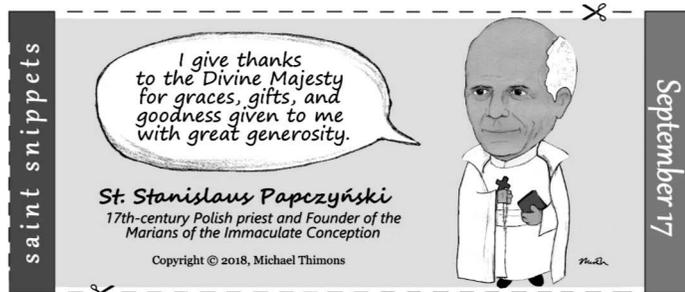
Matthew 18:21



Saint John Chrysostom (c. 344-407)

September 13

“Speaking truth to power” may have become just another cliché, but doing precisely that cost John “the Golden Mouth” (Chrysostom) his diocese and, after exile and a forced march, his health and life. “Renowned for eloquence, heroic in suffering” (Sacramentary), John’s scriptural insights still comfort and challenge. Mystical theologian, he bids Eastern Christians, whose principal Divine Liturgy bears his name, to lift up their hearts to “God ineffable, beyond comprehension, invisible, beyond understanding, existing forever, always the same.” Model pastor, he warns Roman Catholics in the Liturgy of the Hours not to neglect God-in-the-flesh: “Would you honor Christ’s body? Do not scorn his nakedness, honoring him here in church with silken robes, while neglecting him cold and naked outside. What use to burden Christ’s altar with golden chalices, while Christ himself starves to death? What use dressing the altar with gold-woven cloths, while denying the shivering Christ the clothes he needs? Do not adorn the church while ignoring your needy brother: he is the most precious temple of all!” (Saturday, Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time). —Peter Scagnelli, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Forgiveness

Nearly ten years before, a son and father had parted ways when the business they shared went bankrupt. The son blamed the father. They did not speak to each other again. Then the father became seriously ill. The mother called the son and told him he had better come soon. The son walked sheepishly into the hospital room. The father motioned his son to him and whispered: “Did you ever think you could do anything that would keep me from loving you?”

Resentment and anger are foul things, the first reading from Sirach tells us. Remember the last things. Stop hating. Live by the commandments. As St. Paul writes to the Romans, we are to live for the Lord and die for the Lord.

Jesus’ parable in today’s Gospel reminds us of God’s compassion. The immense sin of humanity has been forgiven and stricken from the record. We are to forgive others in the same way.

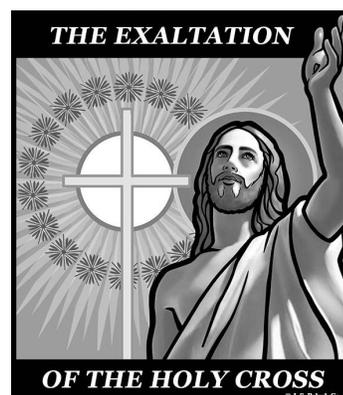
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	Nm 21:4b-9; Ps 78:1-2, 34-38; Phil 2:6-11; Jn 3:13-17
Tuesday:	1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-31a; Ps 100:1b-5; Jn 19:25-27 or Lk 2:33-35
Wednesday:	1 Cor 12:31 — 13:13; Ps 33:2-5, 12, 22; Lk 7:31-35
Thursday:	1 Cor 15:1-11; Ps 118:1b-2, 16ab-17, 28; Lk 7:36-50
Friday:	1 Cor 15:12-20; Ps 17:1bcd, 6-8b, 15; Lk 8:1-3
Saturday:	1 Cor 15:35-37, 42-49; Ps 56:10c-14; Lk 8:4-15
Sunday:	Is 55:6-9; Ps 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18; Phil 1:20c-24, 27a; Mt 20:1-16a

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time; Grandparents Day; Catechetical Sunday
Monday:	The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Tuesday:	Our Lady of Sorrows
Wednesday:	Ss. Cornelius and Cyprian
Thursday:	St. Robert Bellarmine
Friday:	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) 5781
Saturday:	St. Januarius; Blessed Virgin Mary



Today’s Readings

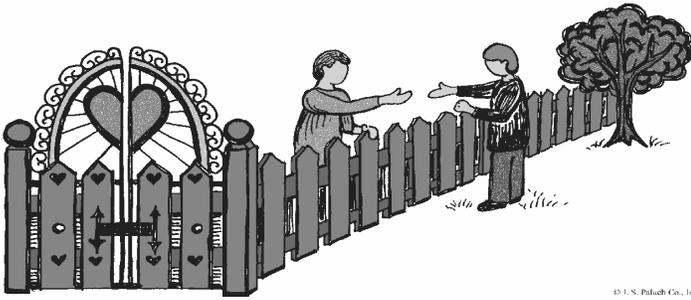
First Reading — Remember the commandments and hate not your neighbor (Sirach 27:30 — 28:7).

Psalm — The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion (Psalm 103).

Second Reading — Whether we live, or whether we die, we do so for the Lord (Romans 14:7-9).

Gospel — Forgive one another from your heart (Matthew 18:21-35).

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Twenty-fourth Sunday
In Ordinary Time
September 13, 2020
**Forgive your neighbor's injustice;
then when you pray,
your own sins will be forgiven.**

—Sirach 28:2

Treasures From Our Tradition

Our national memory will keep September 11 holy for generations to come, as we remember the innocent dead. Our memories of the attack on our nation are intertwined with memories of how we human beings are natural symbol-makers. In one parish, as a candlelight vigil ended, the assembly, without being instructed, took their candles and stood shoulder to shoulder, down the steps and along the city streets for a quarter mile. Slowly, people came out of their houses bearing tapers and candles. In the first hours of crisis, we stood vigil, we prayed from the heart, and we celebrated the human ability to draw light out of terrible darkness.

Stories of that terrible day necessarily drift to tales of heroism, courage, dignity, faith, solidarity, hope, community. The church learned long ago through hard experience that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” Perhaps the victims of 9/11 have gifts to bring that we are only just discovering as believers in a just and loving God. They are teaching us still, and today is a day for lighting candles at the table and being silent for a moment before the abundance of God’s gifts. Today reminds us that we are capable of acts of indescribable beauty even in the face of great evil.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

“**You missed the point,**” we might be tempted to shout at the servant in today’s Gospel. His master had just forgiven a huge debt when he cried for mercy, and yet, when given the opportunity to show mercy himself, he instead acted violently and with retribution toward a fellow servant. Certainly, he had missed the point of his master’s merciful actions toward him, and suffered the consequences as a result. He missed the point. He is not alone, however. We all “miss the point” sometimes—we miss the point of God’s enduring covenant of love, and miss the mark in our call to live as though we are the Lord’s, for this is who we are.

Becoming More Like Christ

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive, he was probably stunned at Jesus’ response. Peter had asked, “As many as seven times?” Seven being the perfect number, surely this is enough forgiveness, Peter likely thought. Jesus’ response seems lavish beyond proportion. “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” Jesus understands the fullness of God’s mercy and teaches that disciples are called to this same lavish outpouring of mercy. God showers compassion on humanity, beyond what might seem sensible or wise, yet we are called to “remember the Most High’s covenant, and overlook faults,” to give others the benefit of the doubt, knowing that God does this and more with us, each and every day. As recipients of God’s compassion, we must extend forgiveness and care beyond what might seem reasonable, because God’s love is beyond human reason.

How Much Is Too Much?

All this might seem just too much for us. It is one thing to recognize God’s enduring covenant love. It is another to grasp that we are called to the same sort of lavishness in mercy and forgiveness ourselves. Saint Paul helps us put this in perspective. We no longer live for ourselves, but for the Lord. In life and death, we belong to God and are called to be witnesses to God’s love, even in the most challenging circumstances. A friend turns away from us; we are called to turn toward the friend with mercy. A co-worker hurts us; we are called to approach him or her with forgiveness, seventy-seven times no less! God’s love is always about what is just and right. As God’s people, we live and die for the Lord, forgive even when it doesn’t make sense to do so, and leave the rest in God’s hands.

Sir 27:30 — 28:7; Ps 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12; Rom 14:7–9; Mt 18:21–35

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Sunday Readings
September 13, 2020
Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Sir 27:30 — 28:7

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

**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.

He redeems your life from destruction,
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

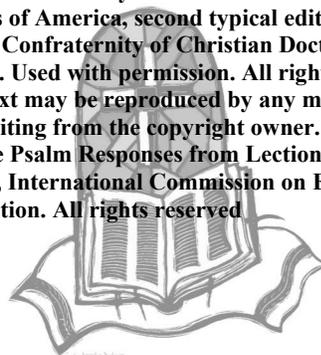
**Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and
no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the
Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then,
whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is
why Christ died and came to life, that he might be
Lord of both the dead and the living.**

Gospel

Mt 18:21–35

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.”

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Prayer of the Faithful

Let us bring our prayers for one another and the world to our merciful and forgiving God.

For reconciliation among all who are baptized into Christ; for collaboration among all churches in sharing his message of forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord.

For peace and reconciliation among ancient enemies, especially in the Middle East, let us pray to the Lord.

For catechists and all who share the good news of God's reign, and for all who yearn to know our loving God better, let us pray to the Lord.

For the safety of all first responders, and for the peace of mind of their loved ones, let us pray to the Lord.

For grandparents everywhere to know the love of their children and grandchildren, and to be treated with respect and dignity, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19, and for all who have died, especially N., N., and N., let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

**O God of mercy,
your forgiveness knows no bounds.
Teach us the way of reconciliation and peace,
and graciously hear all these our prayers
through Christ our Lord.**

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