

SAINT MARY MAGDALEN SMALL GROUPS



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

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.”

Reading 1 [SIR 27:30—28:7](#)

Reading 2 [ROM 14:7-9](#)

Our pastoral year theme is “Created and Called to Love”. Pope Francis calls us to care *for all of God’s creation*. We *were created* to love, and we are *called* to love. We have *the capacity* to love, and *the obligation* to love. Our stewardship focus on love this week: forgiveness.

As a Parish, we are reflecting upon the rich teachings of “Laudato Si” – pointing to chapters that bring the Gospel message home. This month: Chapter 2.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS & DISCUSSION

- **SIR 27:30-28:7:** The First Reading from Sirach is rich with forgiveness teaching. “Wrath and anger are hateful things...yet the sinner hugs them tight.”

Is there anger or a grudge you have been holding onto? What are the obstacles to forgiving others? Pride? Perhaps the person has hurt you in the same way many times?

“Forgive your neighbor’s injustice: then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.” Sirach speaks to the same theme from part of last week’s readings that reminded us to “Love your neighbor,” only in this instance it presents it another way: “Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor...”

Have you set standards of forgiveness? Do you sometimes dole out forgiveness only to those you deem worthy? Sometimes, the hardest person to forgive is yourself. What standards have you set for yourself?

- **ROM 14: 7-9:** “None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself”, St. Paul says. If our relationship to God is our first concern, the truth is that how we relate to one another, how we treat those around us, is just as important. This is “common-good” teaching from St. Paul.

Pope Francis wants us to see forgiveness as not solely an individual act, but a communal one. Discuss all the relationships impacted by the act of forgiveness. From *Laudato Si*, chapter 2: “Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruin my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth.”

- **MT 18: 21-35:** Jesus says there is no end point to forgiveness. We are called to forgive from the heart – without seeking retribution. The Lord’s forgiveness is given freely but may be taken back if we do not emulate this forgiveness in our lives.

LIVING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE – The heart to forgive

Forgiveness, Pope Francis says, “is only possible in and through the Holy Spirit. It is a grace to be implored humbly from the Lord. Forgiveness, then, is to become active, *undertaking a journey together*, and never in solitude.” The Gospel isn’t easy. Sometimes the hurt is so deep, that the best we can do for now, is to first ask God to give us the desire to forgive. In other words, pray about it.

(In silence, first consider who needs forgiving in our lives – and our own shortcomings. Pause as you read out loud, line by line....)

Jesus, you know the way I feel. You know I struggle with forgiving.

But I also know that holding onto a hardened, unforgiving heart affects my body, mind, and spirit.

It hurts me more than it hurts my offender.

It also hurts my relationship with you.

Jesus, I admit my helplessness and powerlessness when it comes to even thinking about forgiving.

But I also know that all things are possible for those who cooperate with your grace.

With Saint Paul, I believe that I can do all things in you who strengthens me.

Empower me, Jesus, to do this work of forgiveness. Place within my heart the desire to forgive.

MORE CONNECTIONS TO LAUDATO SI

In the Gospel of Creation, Chapter 2, LS 69-71 strikes at similar themes of this week's Scripture:

...we were all created with God's goodness

LS-69: "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things".[43]

... we have a duty to each other

LS-70: Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbor, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth. When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered.

.... God has given us a path to a new beginning

LS-71: Although "the wickedness of man was great in the earth" (*Gen* 6:5) and the Lord "was sorry that he had made man on the earth" (*Gen* 6:6), nonetheless, through Noah, who remained innocent and just, God decided to open a path of salvation. **In this way he gave humanity the chance of a new beginning. All it takes is one good person to restore hope!** The biblical tradition clearly shows that this renewal entails recovering and respecting the rhythms inscribed in nature by the hand of the Creator. ... Finally, after seven weeks of years, which is to say forty-nine years, the Jubilee was celebrated as a year of general forgiveness and "liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants" (cf. *Lev* 25:10).

A Christian Prayer in Union with Creation

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,
help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you!
Amen.

