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**Year A** 24TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

"TO THE HEIGHTS" YOUTH EDITION AVAILABLE ALSO,

## Sunday Mass Readings

**First Reading:**

Ecclesiasticus 27:33-28:9

**Responsorial Psalm:**

Psalm 102(103):1-4,9-12

**Second Reading:**

Romans 14:7-9

**Gospel:**

Matthew 18:21-35

*'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.'*



image: canva.com

## Hear

Grab your Bible and look up the Gospel reading. Don't have one? No worries, you can find this week's readings online [here](#).

Check out [this video](#) on the readings for children.

## Pray

In the Gospel today we hear Jesus speak about forgiveness.

- What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this piece of Scripture? How do these words resonate with you personally?
- Is there someone in your life that you find it hard to forgive? Someone who owes you a debt of some kind, material or emotional? The Lord might be calling you this week to begin a process of healing and forgiveness towards them. Watch Fr Mike Schmitz's video "[Forgiveness](#)" to look at practical steps towards forgiving someone who has wronged you.
- Take some time this week to contemplate the Father's mercy towards you too. If possible, make a good confession, conscious of all our need for His mercy.

## Talk

In today's readings we hear Jesus remind us of God's great mercy for us, but also of how we need to show mercy to others.

- How many times did Peter ask Jesus if we need to forgive? 7! 7 is a lot when you think about it. If someone broke your toys 7 times, it'd be hard to keep forgiving them!
- Jesus doesn't want us to keep count and to hold back mercy from others. It doesn't mean that we don't guard our hearts, but it means we must try to forgive as God forgives us.
- How do we forgive each other in our family? Are we ready to forgive easily, or do we hold grudges, or put conditions on our forgiveness?

## Family Challenge!

For those who have already received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, try to arrange a time to go to confession this week. Make a sincere examination of conscience first. For those who are too young yet, encourage a time of prayer to seek God's forgiveness for any little things we may have done that hurt another. Ask Jesus for the grace to be kind and merciful!

## BE MERCIFUL

Today's Gospel reading directly follows last week's Gospel in which Jesus taught the disciples how to handle disputes and conflict within the Christian community. In today's reading Peter asks Jesus how many times one ought to extend forgiveness to another. Peter proposes a reasonable number of times, perhaps seven. Jesus replies by extending Peter's proposal by an enormous amount; not just seven times should one forgive, but 77 times. The parable of the unforgiving servant is Jesus' elaboration of his initial reply to Peter. Through the parable we come to understand the depths of God's mercy toward us and the results of our acceptance of God's forgiveness.

The king in the parable decides to settle accounts with his servants. We are told that one servant in particular owes the king an enormous sum of money. Despite the promise of the servant, it is unlikely that he would ever be able to repay the debt that he owes. The king is moved by the humility of the pleading servant and mercifully forgives the debt. Rather than displaying gratitude for this forgiveness, the servant confronts a fellow servant who owes him a small debt—a pittance when compared with the amount that was owed to the king. The unmerciful servant refuses the pleas of his fellow servant and sends the servant to prison.

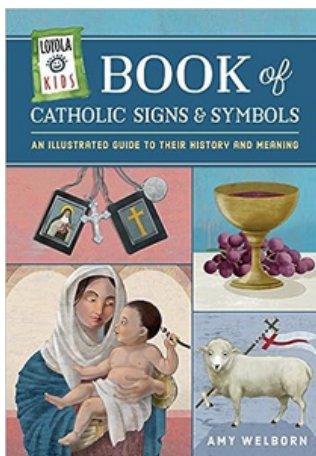
A few other servants tell the merciful king about the actions of the unforgiving servant. The king punishes the servant because he refused to show the kind of mercy he had himself received from the king. Jesus concludes by indicating that this is how it will be with God and those who refuse to forgive one another.

There is a temptation to quantify forgiveness as Peter tried to do, but Jesus' point is that forgiveness is not about quantity—the number of times we extend forgiveness to another. In the parable the king's forgiveness is like God's forgiveness, and it transforms us, helping us to be as forgiving as God. The lesson is clear: If we hoard God's mercy while showing no mercy to others, we risk forfeiting the effects of God's mercy in our lives.

taken from **Loyola Press Sunday Connection**

## CHECK IT OUT: LOYOLA KIDS BOOK OF CATHOLIC SIGNS & SYMBOLS: AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THEIR HISTORY AND MEANING

Understand faith in the symbols that surround us. For centuries people learned about the Christian faith through paintings, sculptures, objects, and gestures. Simple images still convey deep messages if we learn how to see and understand them. From the sign of the fish to the Stations of the Cross, from the palm branch to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Loyola Kids Book of Catholic Signs and Symbols will enable children and adults to experience faith with curiosity and wonder. Available from Amazon / Veritas Bookstore.



## WHAT FORGIVENESS IS

Can you imagine forgiving the same person seven times? I don't know about you, but to me that sounds pretty difficult. And yet Jesus tells Peter to be willing to forgive 7 x 70 times! He doesn't mean we should keep track. Instead He's holding up for us an incredibly high standard of living - the Christian standard: be merciful as your Heavenly Father is merciful. This is tough, really tough! Is it impossible? By human standards, yes, but by God's grace, thankfully no. Jesus calls us to love and forgive others as He does if we want to call ourselves a follower of His. Jesus calls us to give and not count the cost, or as we looked at in Fr Mike's video, to count the cost and still forgive. Lack of forgiveness can enslave us, hold our hearts hostage, eat away at our joy and our ability to love. This is not living life to the full. This is not a path to joy. Jesus also knows we're weak and frail. He modelled for us how to live this way by His own life and death. He promises us all the help that we need. If we wait until we feel like doing any of this, that feeling may never come. Love is a decision, forgiveness is a decision. If you are struggling to forgive, make a decision to set your heart free, by God's grace.

This week:

- Are there people in your life that you struggle to forgive? People who have wronged you and hurt you? People who owe you a debt, who have cost you something in your life? If you feel like you can start the process of forgiveness, follow Fr Mike's advice. If you struggle with that, begin by praying for the grace to want to forgive them, and commit to that prayer.



"Forgiveness": Fr Mike Schmitz



Matthew West: Forgiveness

To the Heights Youth Resource also available



## Family Prayer

*O my God, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins; fr not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen*

## EVENTS

**Intro to Theology of the Body Study Group**, The Foyer of Charity, Dunmore East Waterford, X91 FC65. Mondays 7.30 - 9pm. October 7 - December 4. Prayer, DVD, Discussion, Tea/Coffee. Registration Essential: Helen 086 1678027 / hellywilliams@gmail.com

**Formation Meetings for Families with the Home of the Mother:** Beginning with Adoration at 6:20, formation meeting at 7pm. For new members - Catechesis for parents and games with brothers and sisters for children.

**Evangelium Apologetics Conference for Young Adults:** Saturday 7 October, 11am - 4.30pm, Imperial Hotel Cork. €15. Book in advance. More info on [www.evangelium.ie](http://www.evangelium.ie)

**Youth2000 Munster Retreat:** Catholic Youth Retreat - faith, fun and fellowship for those aged 16 - 35 years in Middleton Co. Cork, 20 - 22 October. Donation only. For more details and information on how to book go to [www.youth2000.ie](http://www.youth2000.ie)

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