

Reflecting on the 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

**Let us begin our time of prayer for the
Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time:**

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

**Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's
grace and light to fill your heart and your mind
as you open to the Word.**



Bless the Lord, my soul
And bless God's holy name
Bless the Lord, my soul
Who leads me into life.



**Spend some time just looking at the three
images.**

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



The Lord is compassion and love

My soul, give thanks to the Lord
all my being, bless his holy name.
My soul, give thanks to the Lord
And never forget all his blessings.

The Lord is compassion and love

The Lord is compassion and love;
Slow to anger and rich in mercy.
As a father has compassion on his sons,
The Lord has pity on those who fear him.

The Lord is compassion and love

The love of the Lord is everlasting
upon those who hold him in fear.
His justice reaches out to children's children
when they keep his covenant in truth.

The Lord is compassion and love

**Now, either read slowly to yourself this story
from the Gospel according to Matthew or better
still, read it aloud, again slowly.**

From the Gospel according to Matthew 18:21-35



Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.

Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

The reflection on the Gospel is provided by Fr Chris Thomas, Director of the Irenaeus Project.



Frankie is a drug addict. His parents broke up when he was very small, and he was unable to cope living first with one and then the other. He was a vulnerable, anxious child, insecure and frightened. He entered into his teenage years and became extremely difficult to handle. He was aggressive and violent.

His parents who loved him very much were unable to control him. He was expelled from school and was educated in a special unit which made him, sadly, more difficult. As Frankie's life spiralled into chaos, he began to take drugs, so called soft ones at first, and then harder ones as time went on. Over the last twenty years he has been in and out of rehabilitation centres paid for by his Dad. He has been in prison several times for dealing to finance his habit.

Each time Frankie has been in prison his Dad has said the same thing, 'No more!' Yet each time he has come out of prison, his Dad has paid again for specialist rehabilitation. When that has finished, his Dad has found him a job working within the family firm and a flat to live in. It does not matter what Frankie does, and despite his own protestations at times, his Dad is always there for him. I asked Ed, Frankie's Dad, what would have to happen for him to give up on his son. He looked me straight in the eye and said 'I often wish I could say and mean this is the last time, but he's my son. Only death would make me give up on him. I love him more than I love myself.'

Ed showed me something powerful during that conversation. He helped me to sense the presence of

God. It seems to me that forgiveness is a mystery to be found in the heart of humanity. It is caught up with the reality of love. It is a facet of love and whenever we experience forgiveness, we get a tiny glimpse of the reality of a God who has forgiven humanity and every individual.

We are forgiven for the mess we make of our own lives, the lives of others and the life of this planet that we have been given. That's what we see in the action of the king in releasing his steward. The transformative moment is when we begin to realise it and begin to see who God is. In the face of such immensity, and aware of our own smallness and pettiness all we can do is say thank you and live lives of forgiveness ourselves.

The whole of chapter 18 of Matthew's gospel is a reflection on how we're to live and our main characteristic is to be forgiveness. You have the story of the lost sheep and this parable of the unforgiving servant as well as the way to deal with those who sin against the community that we listened to last week. It's constant forgiveness and mercy and compassion. Yet so many of us act like the steward in the Gospel. He was willing to accept the forgiveness of his master but not to allow forgiveness to flow through into the life of the one who owed him money. We can be willing to accept the forgiveness of God but not to allow that forgiveness to flow into the lives of others.

For the sake of the world we need to share and receive forgiveness as an illustration that it is possible and that it really is the only way to peace filled lives. It's a process and it's hard but we have within us the presence of God, the power of the spirit in whom we can do anything. I often think of the words of Corrie Ten Boom who was preaching in Germany about

forgiveness and saw in the congregation an SS officer who had treated her sister Betsy very badly. She knew she had to forgive him and as she stood before him, she cried out within herself 'Lord, I can't do this but you can' and she found herself embracing him. I was once on a course where the leader told us that the greatest sign of the kingdom of God is forgiveness. God loves us and constantly pours out forgiveness upon us. One way of showing others that truth is to allow his forgiveness to flow through us into the lives of others.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by the late Patrick Purnell SJ.



A Thought for Today

I created you to praise, reverence and serve me.
Do not ever be afraid of me
Even if you sin monstrosly,
Because I do good to those who do not do good,
Even to those who hate me.
I bless those who curse me;
I love those who do not love me;
And I am kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

If you were my enemy, I would still love you.
Were you to steal from me,
I wouldn't ask for it back.
I am merciful; I don't judge; I don't condemn;
And I forgive, O yes I forgive,
Even if you come back to me to be forgiven
Seventy times seven every day.
Now are you beginning to understand
Why so many people do not believe I exist?
They can't believe in such goodness.

As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers of intercession for the people and situations in our world today that seem to you to be most in need.

Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked us to pray at this time and then you may like to include one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

As we enter into Creation Time, we pray for the Church: that she may be a beacon of hope throughout the world, reminding us all of our responsibility to care for and protect God's precious gift of creation.

We pray for the world, our common home: that through God's grace we may hear its cry of the damage done and be moved to protect it for future generations to enjoy.

We pray for those people who are already facing droughts, floods and storms: that God may grant them strength and hope for the future as they work to adapt to the changing climate.

We pray for our parish and our local community: that through the grace of God we may hear the urgent cry of the earth and of the poor and be inspired to respond at this crucial time.

We pray for all those who are close to death and those who have recently died: that they may know the eternal love of God.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection, listen to *Forgive our sins as we forgive.*



Forgive our sins as we forgive
You taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace
To live the words we say.

How can you pardon reach and bless
The unforgiving heart
That broods on wrongs and will not let
Old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals
The truth we dimly knew:
What trivial debts are owed to us;
How great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
And bid resentment cease;
Then, bound to all in bonds of love
Our lives will spread your peace.

Acknowledgements

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