

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Resentment has a way of keeping old injuries remarkably fresh. A conversation that lasted five minutes can occupy our thoughts for five years. We replay what someone said, imagine what we should have said in return, and wait for an apology that may never come. The original offense happened in the past, but resentment gives it permission to keep taking something from us today.

This Sunday's first reading names this danger: *"Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight"* (Sirach 27:30). That image is uncomfortable because it is true. We can hold onto anger because it feels justified, protective, or even powerful. Yet the tighter we cling to resentment, the more it begins to shape our thoughts, relationships, prayer, and recovery.

Peter raises the question in Sunday's gospel: *"Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?"* Jesus answers, *"I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times"* (Matthew 18:21–22). Jesus is not giving Peter a larger number to count. He is describing a life shaped by mercy.

He then tells the parable of a servant forgiven an enormous debt who refuses to forgive a much smaller debt owed to him. The contrast is meant to expose something in us. Many of us know what it is to stand before God carrying a debt we could not repay. We have received mercy through confession, recovery, second chances, repaired relationships, and people who continued loving us when they had reason to walk away. The question is whether the mercy we have received is changing the way we hold the debts of others.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending the wound did not matter. It does not excuse harmful behavior, erase

consequences, restore trust immediately, or require us to remain in an unsafe relationship. Reconciliation involves two people and often requires repentance, honesty, and repair. Forgiveness can begin within us even when the other person never changes. It is the decision to release our claim to vengeance and place the debt in God's hands.

This is deeply connected to recovery. Resentment can become a doorway back into old patterns. We justify isolation, self-pity, anger, or acting out because someone else hurt us. Inventory helps us name these resentments honestly. Prayer helps us surrender them. Amends teach us to examine our own side of the street without denying what another person has done. Over time, we discover that forgiveness is not primarily a reward we give someone who deserves it. It is part of the freedom Christ is offering us.

Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading, *"None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself"* (Romans 14:7). What we carry affects other people. Unresolved anger can spill into relationships that had nothing to do with the original wound. Forgiveness makes room for us to become more available to God, to others, and to the life in front of us.

Some resentments release quickly while others do not. We may need to surrender the same injury to God many times before our emotions follow our decision. Perhaps that is part of what Jesus means by forgiving seventy-seven times. We keep releasing the debt, not because the wound was insignificant, but because we have already been shown immeasurable mercy.

Forgiveness is not weakness, and it does not require forgetting. It is an act of trust. We place justice in God's

hands and refuse to let resentment continue directing our lives. Christ does not ask us to deny what happened. He invites us to carry the truth without being chained to it, and to receive a freedom greater than our anger.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What resentment are you still "hugging tight," and what do you believe holding onto it is doing for you?

- Where might you be confusing forgiveness with excusing harm, restoring trust, or removing a necessary boundary?

- What would it look like to place a particular debt in God's hands while honestly attending to your own part in the situation?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Sirach 27:30—28:7

RESP. PS. Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12

SECOND READING Romans 14:7–9

GOSPEL Matthew 18:21–35