

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Resentment can be easy to miss in recovery from lust addiction. We usually recognize obvious dangers such as pornography or fantasy, but anger can be just as powerful beneath the surface. A painful interaction can leave us feeling wounded and alone. If we do not bring that hurt into the light, lust can begin to look like relief.

This Sunday's first reading names the danger directly: *"Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight"* (Sirach 27:30). That image is especially important for us. Resentment can feel protective because it keeps the offense alive and reminds us why we were hurt. At the same time, it can become a quiet permission slip to withdraw from others and return to old patterns. Recovery asks us to notice that movement before anger turns into justification.

Peter asks Jesus 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). He then tells of a servant who receives extraordinary mercy but refuses to extend mercy to someone else.

Those of us recovering from lust know what it means to need mercy. We have brought hidden behavior into confession and told the truth in rooms where we once feared being known. Many of us have also received compassion from people we expected to reject us. These experiences slowly teach us that shame does not have to define our identity. Jesus asks that the mercy we receive begin reshaping the way we hold the failures of others.

Forgiveness does not mean pretending that betrayal or rejection did not matter. It does not require immediate

reconciliation or restored trust. In some relationships, distance or firm boundaries may still be necessary. Forgiveness is the decision to stop using another person's wrong as permission to remain trapped in resentment or self-destructive behavior.

This work also includes receiving God's mercy for ourselves. Self-forgiveness does not erase responsibility. We still make amends where possible and face the harm we have caused honestly. But endless self-condemnation can become another form of self-absorption. If God has forgiven what we have sincerely confessed, humility eventually asks us to stop treating our shame as though it has more authority than His mercy.

Saint Paul writes in the second reading, *"None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself"* (Romans 14:7). Resentment narrows our attention until we become consumed by what happened to us. Lust does something similar by turning desire inward. Recovery moves in the opposite direction. It restores our capacity for relationship and helps us become available to love.

When resentment surfaces, we can bring it into inventory instead of allowing it to remain hidden. We can speak honestly with a sponsor or trusted person and ask God to show us our part without denying another person's responsibility. Naming anger honestly weakens its power. So does choosing connection when our instinct is to isolate.

Some wounds require repeated surrender. Forgiving seventy-seven times may mean placing the same injury in God's hands whenever it returns. We do not forgive because the wound was insignificant. We forgive because Christ

has shown us mercy, and because we no longer want anger shaping our recovery or our relationships.

Freedom from lust involves more than saying no to temptation. It also means surrendering the resentments that make temptation more attractive. Christ invites us to live from mercy instead of entitlement and from truth instead of fantasy. As resentment loses its grip, we become more free to receive love, offer love, and live with integrity.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Where have you noticed resentment making lust, fantasy, or isolation more appealing?
- Is there someone whose failure you continue to hold tightly, and what might it mean to begin placing that debt in God's hands?
- Where do you need to receive God's mercy more fully for yourself while remaining honest about the harm you have caused?

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