Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 18:21–35: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

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.”

Focus Questions

1. What did Peter ask Jesus?
2. How many times did Jesus tell Peter he has to forgive his brother?
3. In Jesus' parable about the Kingdom of Heaven, what does the king first say should be done to the servant who cannot pay his debt?

4. What does the servant then do and how does the king respond?

5. What does the same servant do to a fellow servant who owes him a smaller loan?

6. What does the king do when he hears about what his servant has done?

7. Jesus says that the Father will do the same to us as the king did to the wicked servant unless we do what?
Our Response to Forgiveness

Directions: The parable of the unforgiving servant shows us how not to respond to forgiveness. The servant in the parable refuses to show the same mercy to others that was shown to him. Jesus told Peter to forgive his brother seventy-seven times. The number seven signifies completeness. Jesus was teaching us that our forgiveness of others should be limitless. Peter’s own life became an example of this right response to forgiveness.

Peter’s Denial by Anton Rober Leinweber

1. Read about Peter’s denial of Christ in Luke 22:54–62. Who is the figure in the painting above? What moment is this painting portraying? Observing the posture of the figure, how do you think this person feels? How do the colors add to the overall mood of this painting?

2. Read about the commissioning of St. Peter in John 21:15–19. Before Jesus’ crucifixion, Peter had denied Jesus three times. How many times does Jesus ask Peter to feed or tend to His lambs or sheep? Why do you think Jesus asked Peter to do this as many
3. When Jesus tells Peter to take care of His sheep, He is asking Him to take care of the whole Church. How do you think Peter felt having been forgiven by Jesus for his denial, and then given the responsibility to lead the Church? How is his response toward his flock, the members of the Church, different from the response of the unforgiving servant?

**Christ’s Charge to Peter by Raphael**

4. In this painting, why do you think Jesus is pointing to the sheep behind Him? Read Matthew 16:18–19. Why do you think Peter, the figure kneeling before Christ, is holding a key?

5. When Jesus tells Peter that what he binds and looses on earth will be bound and loosed in Heaven, He is giving him and the Apostles the power to forgive or bind sins. Why do you think it was important for Peter to hear the parable of the unforgiving servant? Why do you think it was important for Peter also to receive the gift of Jesus’ mercy?

6. Is there anyone in your life who has hurt you that you are holding a grudge against? Pray an Our Father for that person.