

September 17, 2023

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sir 27:30—28:7

Rom 14:7-9

Mt 18:21-35

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

GROW: Forgiveness. It seems like a relatively simple *concept*, doesn't it? We ask our merciful Father for it every day when we pray the Our Father: "... forgive us our trespasses..." Then reality hits, as we remember the second part of that phrase: "...as we forgive those who trespass against us ..." *As we forgive others*. Oh, that long, hard road of forgiveness! Easier said than done. Sometimes those old sayings have some merit, don't they? And when we look at today's readings, there is nothing cryptic about them: *forgive not seven times but seventy-seven times*, let go of wrath and anger, forgive your brother and sister *from your heart*. Yes, forgiveness is a simple concept, but it's not easy. Perhaps the answer is to re-read today's Scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to put in the hard work if there is someone in our lives to whom we need to offer our heartfelt forgiveness.

GO EVANGELIZE | PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

GO: Bishop Robert Barron, in his *Word on Fire Bible* on the Gospels, has four suggestions related to this Gospel on how to become "a better forgiver." The one that stood out to me immediately is "forgive offenses quickly." Don't let them fester and "settle deeply into your psyche." This seems like very sage advice because we can all have a tendency to "stew" about things that are bothering us, which rarely makes them better. Bishop Barron's other suggestions are: Pay attention to your own sins, go to confessions regularly, and offer forgiveness through a concrete act or sign. Which brings us back to the simplicity of it all: God will always forgive us, so we must always forgive others. Doesn't it make sense that to live in the house of our merciful Father, we must emulate him and have loving hearts rather than vengeful hearts?

PRAY: Examine your heart and take a hard look at whether you are holding on to a wrong that was committed against you. Take it to God in prayer. The more we open our hearts to forgive others, the more at peace we can be. Ponder the last words of today's reading from Sirach:

*Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor;
remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.*