

September 13, 2020

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sir 27:30–28:7

Rom 14:7-9

Mt 18:21-35

GROW: It's part of human nature to focus on the negative "headlines" on any given day. For example, after encountering a traffic delay due to a harmless fender bender on an otherwise uneventful commute, we are more likely to be upset and angry at the delay – and the people who caused it – rather than forgiving of the situation, and aware of the concurrent fact that we made it home safely! The author of the Book of Sirach seems to have this insight into humanity, for he describes wrath and anger as "hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight." I, too, have "hugged tight" to my anger at times over offenses real or perceived, and so I love the way Matthew's Gospel challenges us to not only let go of past hurts, but to forgive: forgive, forgive, forgive. It doesn't mean glossing over the human fender benders that can wreck relationships, but Jesus cautions us to prevent them from becoming the headlines of our lives. Instead, by opening our ears and our hearts to the Good News of God's forgiveness, we can, in turn, extend it to those who have hurt us.

GO: When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray the *Our Father* in an earlier verse in Matthew's Gospel, he used these words: "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Not, "maybe I'll think about forgiving tomorrow," or "I might forgive *this* but I can't forgive *that*." Because when we open our hearts to the Good News of God's forgiveness, we must forgive "from the heart," as Jesus says at the end of today's passage. Is there someone in our lives whom we need to forgive? What's holding us back? Are we "holding tight" to our anger, or hurt, or resentment? Think about a relationship in your life that could use some healing. Perhaps a first step involves a phone call, a letter, an email, or an embrace. In prayer, ask for God's help; seek forgiveness and ask for the grace to forgive others.

ACTION: Think of someone or something that has caused you to hang on to anger or resentment. Write a letter [you're not going to send it!] to that person, or to the "event," as if it were personified. Spell out factually what caused your anger. Then write that you forgive them. Put the pen down, pray that God would help you with the grace to truly forgive, then shred the letter. And let the anger go.