

Cycle A 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Sunday September 17th, 2017

<https://www.presentationministries.com/publications/BookOnForgiveness.asp>

The late great founder of Presentation Ministries Father Al Lauer wrote the following: **“When I was first ordained a priest, I believed that over 50 percent of all problems were at least in part due to unforgiveness. After ten years in ministry, I revised my estimate and maintained 75 to 80 percent of all health, marital, family, and financial problems came from unforgiveness. Now after more than twenty-five years in ministry, I have concluded that over 90 percent of all problems are rooted in unforgiveness.”**

Father Al Lauer in teaching on forgiveness frequently cites today’s Gospel passage. Peter asked Jesus, **“Lord if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?”** Peter was thinking of the old Law where one must forgive three times. Whereas by increasing it to seven times, Peter was showing himself to be big and noble. However, the Divine Teacher, Jesus Christ shows us the infinite mercy of God when He responds, **“I say to you not seven times but seventy-seven times.”** The parable that Jesus proposes; gives us a king who decided to settle accounts, a debtor who owed a huge amount, and a servant who owed a much smaller amount.

The king is Jesus Christ. He is perfect mercy and perfect justice. The debtor who owed a huge amount is each and every one of us. The mercy of God is greater than we can ever imagine. And, each and every one of us is completely dependent on the mercy of the King; Jesus Christ. The servant who owed a much smaller amount is every one that we still need to extend our forgiveness to. According to Jesus own words, those who do not forgive others are a **wicked servant**. We must forgive others as God has forgiven us. Jesus says, **“In anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should payback the whole debt.”** This is the result of each one of us not extending the same mercy to others; that we have received from Jesus.

Forgiveness is hard. Forgiveness is hard! Extending forgiveness is almost always harder on the one who has been hurt, than it is for the one who has caused the hurt. I heard a priest give a mission on forgiveness. He talked about how, we have great fear to face the one we need to forgive. He explained that we often have ill thoughts about a particular person and this keeps us from extending forgiveness. So, he proposed, go straight to God. Pray saying, Lord, I forgive_____ I want you to give_____ too! Five minutes later you will probably have ill thoughts about the person again. Pray the same prayer again. This priest said, this may take a thousand times. And at some point we will no longer have those ill thoughts. This indicates that we have, **“forgiven our brother from our heart.”**

Maybe then we will be able to encounter this particular person, starting out with a card, then a letter, and finally, a face to face encounter sharing mercy with each other.

In closing, at every Mass we pray the Lord's Prayer, think of these words, **"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."** Do we want these words to empty words? Or do we want them to be filled with meaning; with us forgiving others as the Lord has forgiven us?