

## 24<sup>th</sup> (QA&SJ) Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

Who can say no to an all-you-can-eat restaurant, unlimited pizza or bottomless drinks? When it comes to forgiveness, can any of us say, “YES” to Jesus’ response to Peter’s reply? “*Forgiveness should be limitless.*” Peter may have felt good being able to forgive 7X rather than 3X as a pious Jew would gauge his holiness. But Jesus answered, “*I say to you, not 7X but seventy-seven times.*” It means forgiving and being forgiven have no limits. Forgiveness is a never-ending story. The truth is it is not easy to forgive. Humanly speaking, it is not easy to throw bread to people who throw rocks at us. We’d rather throw stones or shoot them. *Give the ‘other cheek’ when slapped?* We’d rather give back a knockout punch.

In the parable, after pleading for mercy the king cancelled the servant’s huge debt. Later the king condemned the servant because he did not extend the same forgiveness granted him to a fellow servant, whose debt was much smaller than his own. The parable illustrates the absurdity of refusing forgiveness. *What is Jesus trying to convey to us?* He invites us to take an inventory of our relationships with one another, examine ourselves and begin the healing process. We forgive others not because we want to be forgiven by God but because God has forgiven us first. *Forgiving others from the heart is an expression of our gratitude to God, who is merciful and wants us to be merciful, too.* “*My heavenly Father will treat you the same way if you do not forgive one*

*another from your heart.”* In short, the kingdom of heaven is closed to those who refuse to forgive.

*When was the last time you made your confession? When was the last time you forgave a brother, a sister, or a friend?* Someone said a good wife always forgives her husband when she’s wrong! Why we should forgive is deeply troubling for us - to know that somebody has something against us, or that we are carrying a grudge against somebody. *‘Resentment is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die.’* We have to let go, forgive and move on. It doesn’t matter if our forgiveness is appreciated or if we have been forgiven back. We need to forgive, period! How do I manage my inability to forgive? *First*, ask Jesus for the grace to forgive. *Second*, recall that Jesus has forgiven us abundantly more than He is asking us to forgive. *Third*, try to see our enemy the way Jesus saw his enemies—as brothers and sisters who lost their way.

Seventy- seven times—the question is not how many times we should forgive one another, *but how we forgive.* 1. Do not think that you are the only one hurt. You have hurt others as well - you too need to be forgiven. 2. Do not take yourself too seriously. We are mere servants. Only the unforgiving servant takes himself seriously, and that brings about his fall from grace. 3. Forgive—just do it and get it over with, and then enjoy the peace and lightness it brings. *What does forgiveness mean? It does not mean, it didn’t happen* (Yes, it

happened!) *To forgive does not mean it did not hurt* (Yes, it hurt!) *It does not mean that you are saying what was done to you or said about you is okay.* (No, it is not!) *To forgive means that I will not allow that experience of hurt to become a wall between you and me.*

*Why forgive? First, you too have been forgiven much. Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future. Second, it is good for you. As long as you do not forgive, it is you who suffers. It is far better to be free and sleep soundly every night than to be deeply disturbed. Letting it go relieves the burden you are carrying. The truth is, the one that hurt you probably doesn't even know or remember they hurt you. They're sleeping just fine. Hatred can eat you up, make you lose sleep and make you lose your peace. So, be good to yourself. We forgive and forget not because they deserve our forgiveness, not because we have a good heart and a terrible memory, but because we deserve peace.*

It is said, *"Hatred is like wet cement. The longer you stay in it, the harder it will be for you to get out of it."* Change that hate to love and forgiveness and you will have the best fruit in your relationships.

*"Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's."* With these words St. Paul asks, *"Why then do you judge your brother?"* This, in part, is also the admonition of Sirach. *"Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults."* Remember the Golden rule, *"Do to others as you would have them do to*

*you.* Another way of saying, “*Love your neighbor.*” In the Lord’s Prayer we ask for pardon in view of the fact that we ourselves are forgiven. *And if we are not?* We must deal with the consequences of our petition. If you cannot forgive - *PRAY. Don’t curse.* Pray much that the Lord will remove the hatred in your heart. You cannot do it alone. Pray for the people who hurt you. May God’s grace and mercy help us understand what life is all about, and enlighten our hearts and minds to live a life of forgiveness and love! Amen.