

**OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES**  
**Reflection for**  
**Twenty-Fourth Sunday (A), September 13, 2020**  
**(May be used for Home Prayer Service)**  
**Dominican Friars, Swansea**

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*This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.*

**FORGIVENESS MAKES US TRUE CHILDREN OF GOD**

Last Sunday, Jesus encouraged us to seek reconciliation among ourselves whenever disputes arise. Today, his message is that we should forgive those who have offended us and not seek revenge. By so doing, we imitate God who forgives us countless times without taking record of our offences.

**Seventy times Seven Times:** Forgiveness of sins is not foreign to the Jews. There were laws written about this religious act on how Jews were to forgive one another. At the end of every seven years, they were required to cancel all the debts their fellow Jews owed them. These would also include the debt of offences. This means that all sins were to be forgiven at the end of every seven years (Deut 15:1-2). The number, seven, also connotes completion in the Old Testament. It was on the seventh day that God completed the work of creation after which he rested (Gen 2:2).

Peter would have had these Old Testament understandings of the number, seven, in mind when he asked Jesus if the limit of his forgiveness was to be seven. On the contrary, Jesus instructed Peter that he was not to forgive seven times, but seventy times seven times. What Jesus meant by this was not the arithmetic result of the equation (490) but that Peter's forgiveness should be limitless and his mercy endless. More so, that God rested on the seventh day does not mean Peter should take a break from forgiveness after the seventh time.

**Forgive as God Forgives:** To drive home his point with Peter, Jesus, with the use of a parable, instructs us to learn from God who is our Father in showing mercy to others. In the parable, he speaks of a servant who owed his master the debt of ten thousand talents. For such a servant, ten thousand talents were the wage of a lifetime. In fact, it was incalculable and almost impossible for the servant to pay. However, his master pardoned him and wrote off his debt.

The servant is each of us who stands in need of the mercy of God. No one can claim innocence before God (Rm 3:23-24). The enormous debt

which the servant owed his master is the weight of our sins and the heavy impact it has on others. Regardless of these, God forgives us and does not keep the record of our faults. If he were to keep a record of our sins, no one would survive the sentence (Ps 130:3).

Furthermore, Christ compares the offences we hold against our fellow humans to one hundred denarii. This is a minor debt and the equivalence of a day's wage. Thus, if God forgives us our grave sins, we are also obliged to forgive others their offences against us. We should forgive those who have offended us because we have been greatly forgiven by God in Christ. In truth, our ability to forgive others is the extent to which we appreciate God's forgiveness which we ourselves enjoy. Also, in linking our attitude of forgiveness to God's, Jesus reminds us of one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer...forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us (Mt 6:12).

**Forgiveness Not Revenge:** Forgiveness is opposed to the thirst for revenge. Surely, we cannot build a peaceful society by being consumed in feelings of hatred and revenge. Unfortunately, many have taken to the option of revenge and turned blind eyes to forgiveness. The First Reading (Sirach 27:30-28:7) rather reminds us that it is with forgiveness and not revenge or hatred that we can have our prayers answered by God. In fact, revenge destroys while forgiveness rebuilds human communities.

**Forgiving and Forgetting:** Our human experience is that even when we sincerely forgive offences, it could be challenging to forget the hurt that was inflicted by them. The sacrament of reconciliation which Christ gave to the Church becomes the balm which heals the wound of our hurt. At this sacrament, we pray to Christ to heal us and help us to truly experience his mercy. We also invoke the Holy Spirit to turn our injury into compassion and purify our memory of all bitterness. We also pray that God will transform our hurt into intercession for our offenders (CCC 2843). Amen.