

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2020

(Ecclesiasticus 27:30 – 28:7; Psalm 102; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35)

A Dad tells the story of when his children were younger, he said ..”one night before bedtime my children had a very heated brotherly and sisterly disagreement. They went to bed and were awakened at 2 o’clock in the morning by a very loud thunderstorm. Hearing an unusual noise upstairs, I called to find out what was going on. A little voice answered ‘we are all in the wardrobe forgiving each other.’”¹

A simple tale of everyday life, which happens in homes throughout the world. People fall out and then fall in again.

Last week I asked us all to look at whether we had offended anyone or whether there was someone whose actions were causing us stress . I encouraged us all to challenge and if we did not feel strong enough to challenge them then to pray for them. How did that work for you? I am not aware of having offended anyone, if I have and you are reading this, please get in touch, so that we can be at peace again. I also reflected prayerfully if anyone was causing me stress and why it may have been stressing me. In the end I decided that what was stressing me was not enough to spoil my peace, as a result I have had a very happy week, culminating last night when I was able to celebrate my daughter’s birthday at a restaurant which had suitable controls in place.

In today’s readings we are reminded that holding on to anger, resentment or stress **damages us**. We are encouraged to forgive at the earliest opportunity. In our reading from Ecclesiasticus we are told that by forgiving our neighbours we will have our own sins forgiven when we pray.

Our psalm reminds us that “The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.” Knowing that we are created in **His** image then we are encouraged to reflect our creator, show compassion and love to those who offend us, be merciful and not allow trivial things to make our blood boil.

The parable of the wicked servant is a lesson for us all. This servant had been forgiven an enormous debt – according to some scholars a talent was the equivalent of 20 years wages, others estimated it at somewhere between £1,000 and £30,000 in today’s money – So if the servant had been put in to the debtor prison until it was paid, in effect he would never have come out alive. By comparison a denarius was about one day’s wages. The 100 denarius owed by the second servant was a much smaller sum. Any reasonable person having in effect just been given their life back would be rejoicing and would be expected to pass on the forgiveness they had received to someone in their debt.

In our parable, Jesus is explaining that God will forgive us of all of our offences and in turn we need to be merciful to those who offend us. Failure to be merciful carries

¹ William J Bausch, *A World of Stories – for preachers and teachers*, (The Columba Press, Dublin, 1998)387.

a very heavy price. Remember the words Jesus gave us ‘forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’

Have you ever experienced true forgiveness? How did it make you feel? Did it encourage you to be merciful to others?

Do we take advantage often enough of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do we ever approach the sacrament of reconciliation while we still harbour any grudges against our neighbour?

The subject of forgiveness always prompts me to listen to a song by Matthew West, for me the words are heaven sent. I would encourage everyone to listen to it. I have included a link for it below and have put some of the words below.

I urge everyone this week to reach out to anyone who may have offended them and to forgive them. Let’s not wait for a thunderstorm to share this wonderful gift. If you forgive someone it sets **you** free.

“It’ll clear the bitterness away
It can even set a prisoner free
There is no end to what its power can do
So let it go and be amazed by what you see through eyes of grace
The prisoner that it really frees is you

Forgiveness, forgiveness
Forgiveness, forgiveness

Show me how to love the unlovable
Show me how to reach the unreachable
Help me now to do the impossible
Forgiveness, forgiveness
Help me now to do the impossible
Forgiveness”²

You can listen to the song at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Lu5udXEZI>

Please keep in your prayers this week

- Those struggling to forgive and those struggling to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Those completing the Baptism Preparation Course this Sunday.
- Fr Dominic as he arrives at St Bede’s Church, that his ministry flourishes here in North-West Hampshire.
- Euan Bower who will be baptised in St Bede’s Church this Sunday.
- Reuben Gook and Heather Mabbott who will be married in St Bede’s Church next Friday

² Matthew West, *Forgiveness*, available from <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/matthewwest/forgiveness.html#:~:text=%22Forgiveness%22.%20It%27s%20the%20hardest%20thing%20to%20give%20away.,you%20have%20just%20to%20say%20the%20word%E2%80%A6.%20Forgiveness.> Accessed 11th September 2020

Deacon Tony Darroch, 11th September 2020.

If you are struggling to find resources or would like suggestions please email me on adarroch@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk or if you would appreciate the odd call from me during this time please send me a message with your contact details and I will get in touch.