

# Praying the Word

Week of the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

## First Reading Sir 27:30–28:7

*Forgive your neighbour's faults and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.*

Resentment and anger, these are foul things, and both are found with the sinner. He who exacts vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord, who keeps strict account of sin.

Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you, and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven. If a man nurses anger against another, can he then demand compassion from the Lord?

Showing no pity for a man like himself, can he then plead for his own sins?

Mere creature of flesh, he cherishes resentment;

who will forgive him his sins?

Remember the last things, and stop hating, remember dissolution and death, and live by the commandments.

Remember the commandments, and do not bear your neighbour ill-will; remember the covenant of the Most High, and overlook the offence.

## Responsorial Psalm

Ps 102:1-4. 9-12. R. v.8

*(R.) The Lord is kind and merciful; slow to anger and rich in compassion.*

1. My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name. My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. (R.)
2. It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. (R.)

3. His wrath will come to an end; he will not be angry for ever. He does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults (R.)

4. For as the heavens are high above the earth so strong is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our sins. (R.)

## Second Reading Rom 14:7-9

*Whether alive or dead, we belong to the Lord.*

The life and death of each of us has its influence on others; if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord. This explains why Christ both died and came to life, it was so that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

## Gospel Acclamation Jn 13:34

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Alleluia!*

## Gospel Mt 18:21-35

*I tell you that you forgive not seven times but seventy times seven.*

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders



that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time," he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me", he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said. "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

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## Season of Creation by Nick Brodie

Twice in today's gospel we hear indebted servants cry "Give me time". Through this parable Jesus shows us that patience and forgiveness are high virtues. These inform the Church's teaching on what Pope Francis calls an 'integral ecology', which basically insists that human progress should be sustainable and compassionate. All human beings exist as part of nature and in relation with each other. God too is part of this dynamic by virtue of the mystery of Creation, but also in a special way through Jesus in the Incarnation and through the Spirit in the Church. We Christians are called, therefore, to be patient and forgiving with nature and with each other as part of God's transcendent plan.

Our opportunities to do this come in many forms. We can reconsider whether our consumer habits are too burdensome on our planet, extracting resources more quickly than they can be replenished. We can choose to buy foods that are sustainably produced, and which justly supports small farmers. And we can encourage our political leaders to be like the good master, supporting debt relief for impoverished countries, abiding by international climate agreements, and taking other such actions that might give our world and its people time to heal.