



St. David's Parish
Monastery Road, Pantasaph,
Holywell. CH8 8PE



February 19, 2023

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat, if thirsty, give something to drink; For live coals you will heap on their heads, and the LORD will vindicate you. (*Prov 25:21-22*)

“if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” Do not be conquered by evil but conquer evil with good. (*Rom 12:20-21*)

READINGS

1st Reading Lv 19:1-2, 17-18

2nd Reading 1 Cor 3:16-23

Gospel Mt 5:38-48

SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS

The first reading, from the book of Leviticus, gives the holiness code: “*Be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy.*” It also gives us the way to share God’s holiness: “*Love your neighbour as yourself.*” The responsorial psalm challenges us to be like our God, kind and merciful and forgiving.

In the second reading, St. Paul gives us an additional reason to be holy. We are to keep our bodies holy because we are the temples of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of God lives in us.

In the Gospel passages taken from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus condemns even the mild form of the “Law of the Talion, (*Lex Talionis*),” the tribal law of

retaliation. Instead of the restricted retaliation allowed by Moses, Jesus gives his new law of love, grace, forgiveness, reconciliation and no retaliation. Jesus' message is For Jesus, retaliation, or even limited vengeance, has no place in the Christian life, although graceful acceptance of an offense requires great strength and discipline of character and strengthening by God's grace. The second part of today's Gospel passage is the central part of the Sermon on the Mount, giving us the Christian ethic of personal relationships: love one's neighbors and forgive one's enemies. It tells us that what makes Christians different is the grace with which they treat others with loving kindness and mercy, even if they don't deserve it. We have to love our enemies with *agápe* love, not because our enemies deserve our love, but because Jesus loves them so much that he died for them.

Forgiveness-Pope Benedict XVI

FORGIVENESS In his marvelous reflection on the Lord's Prayer (in Jesus of Nazareth), Pope Benedict XVI offers his insight on the fifth petition: "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." At the beginning of his meditation he points out that there is a dual aspect to the reality of trespass that impacts the relationship with men, and our relationship with God. These offenses can cut deep when we are on the receiving end, but the healing that is needed is only found in forgiveness, never in retaliation. Pope Benedict points out that "forgiveness' is a theme that pervades the entire Gospel. We meet it at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in the new interpretation of the fifth commandment, when the Lord says to us: 'So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift' (Mt 5:23f)."

Commenting on this passage the Holy Father observed: "You cannot come into God's presence unreconciled with your brother; anticipating him in the gesture of reconciliation, going out to meet him, is the prerequisite for true worship of God. In so doing, we should keep in mind that God himself—knowing that we human beings stood against him, unreconciled—stepped out of his divinity in order to come toward us, to reconcile us." Jesus elaborated God's forgiveness in the powerful parable of the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:21-35). St. Matthew records this parable in the eighteenth chapter of his Gospel. It is the sixth lesson on how Jesus' disciples must live. The passage opens with Peter's question: "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven

times?” Peter’s question reveals how difficult it was for Jesus’ earlier lesson on forgiveness to penetrate our unforgiving hearts. Jesus response, “seventy times seven,” takes our breath away, because this idiomatic expression means “without limit.” Who is it among us that have not tasted the bitterness of hurts and betrayals? Jesus knows that. Therefore to place our wounds in perspective, Jesus contrasts two debts: 100 denarii, which represents our wounds, and 10,000 talents, which represents our offense against God. The comparison is staggering. One hundred denarii is the equivalent of one third of a workingman’s yearly income. Ten thousand talents represents the total annual income earned in more than 2,739 consecutive years! The first debt is trivial in comparison with the enormity of the second. God’s forgiveness, then, becomes our norm. We can forgive, indeed, must forgive, because God’s forgives us. Pope Benedict challenges us precisely at this juncture. “If we want to understand the petition fully and make it our own, we must go one step further and ask: What is forgiveness, really?” The guilt of the perpetrator and the wound of the victim are realities that must be repaired. “For this reason, forgiveness must be more than a matter of ignoring, of merely trying to forget.” It “must be worked through, healed, and thus overcome.” The obvious difficulty of this process explains why there is so little genuine forgiveness in the world. Our ability to heal is like our ability to overcome evil—non existent.

Therefore the transformation and inner purification of both parties that occurs by “suffering all the way through and overcoming evil” only happens within the mystery of Christ crucified. Jesus did more than talk about forgiveness; he lived it. At the end of his life he offered an amazing petition amid his final agony: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Thus Pope Benedict was moved to quote Reinhold Schneider: “evil lives in a thousand forms; it occupies the pinnacles of power...it bubbles up from the abyss [of hell]. Love has just one form—your Son.” After the Resurrection Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times. He didn’t say, “Peter, I forgive you, but I don’t trust you.” He didn’t remind Peter of how deeply he was wounded when he overheard Peter taking an oath that he didn’t even know him. Jesus didn’t withdraw his intimacy; instead he embraced Peter with his love and total forgiveness. Jesus’ forgiveness was the flaming coal that burned away Peter’s guilt bringing the inner healing he desperately needed. Peter could say, “He loves me. He forgives me. I am still his cherished friend.” At the same time Jesus’ forgiveness brought the gift of compunction. Peter could remember that awful moment of his betrayal with great sadness and copious tears while at the same time experiencing the comfort and joy of Jesus’ love. The gift of compunction prompted David to write, “For I know my transgression, and my sin is ever before me,” literally “before my face” (Ps 51:3).

Forgiveness allowed St. Paul to write: “For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor 15:9). Jesus’ mercy moved St. Augustine to lament, “How late have I loved thee.” We must forgive others and ourselves the way Jesus forgives. However, there is a price. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “We must put our heart—or, better, our whole existence—on the line. And even this act is insufficient; it can become effective only through communion with the One who bore the burdens of us all.”

FEB 11/12 COLLECTIONS

Gift Aid collection	125
Loose cash	630.56
Total	755.56

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

**Sacrament of Confession at 11.30 am on Saturday
ON EMERGENCY ANY TIME 0741-749-4277**

Please Pray for our Sick

Ann Parry, Mary Toumaine, Patrick Nagle,
Phillip Mc Greavy, Anthony Parry

ANNIVERSARIES (Feb 19-25)

Michael Lynch, ‘92: Peter McLaughlin, ‘99: Br. Augustine Oddy, ‘77: Leonard Evans,
Patrick Lynch, Bernard Ryan-2022, Rose Anne Corkhill, Margaret Brown, ‘86: Mary
Doyle, ‘87: Fr. Basil Bomar Scothern, ‘76

LENT

HOLYDAY OF OBLIGATION AND DAY OF FASTING,

As we begin the season of LENT, Holy Mass and imposition of Ashes
will take place on Wednesday, 22 February 2023 AT 10 AM.

Website: <http://www.pantasaph.org>
Email: pantasaphstdavids@gmail.com
Phone: 01352 711053, **0741-749-4277**
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