

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Give peace, O Lord, to those who wait for you,
that your prophets be found true.
Hear the prayers of your servant,
and of your people Israel.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Eccles 27:30-28:7

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus
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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 102:1-4,9-12

Response:

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to
anger and rich in mercy.

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

Rm 14:7-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Romans
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.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 18:21-35

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew
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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour on our supplications, O Lord,
and in your kindness accept these, your
servants' offerings,
that what each has offered to the honour of your
name
may serve the salvation of all.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

How precious is your mercy, O God!
The children of men seek shelter in the
shadow of your wings.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the working of this heavenly gift, O Lord,
we pray,
take possession of our minds and bodies,
so that its effects, and not our own desires,
may always prevail in us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TO FORGIVE
WITHOUT
LIMIT

MT 18:21-35

Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone. Jewish tradition said that God forgives three times and punishes on the fourth. Since human beings couldn't be more forgiving than God, forgiveness was, therefore, limited to three times.

Peter must have thought that forgiving someone seven times was more than generous, since it went far beyond what Jewish tradition taught. But Jesus says it's not enough; the Christian must forgive seventy times seven—in other words, never stop forgiving.

Jesus always showed mercy. As Pope Francis put it, the only people Jesus condemns are those who think they don't need it. "Jesus does not say, 'Blessed are those who plot revenge,' Pope Francis said. "He calls 'blessed' those who forgive and do so 'seventy times seven.' All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion. If we approach the Lord with sincerity and listen carefully, there may well be times when we hear his reproach: 'Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'"

In other words, we must forgive because God has forgiven us. We must never stop forgiving. ■

REFLECT

What can we Christians say about
forgiveness?

1. People are basically good. We have an innate goodness. The creation story in Genesis tells us God saw all that God had made and found it very good. In Laudato Si, Pope Francis uses a beautiful word to describe God's relationship with creation: All is a caress of God. When we see people as good, then we will treat them differently.
 2. God forgives us first. That's the story of salvation. No matter how often God's people strayed, God never gave up on them. As Pope Francis puts it in his memoir Hope, we children get up to all kinds of things, we make mistakes, we sin, but when we ask for pardon, God's mercy embraces us and forgives us, always. God never tires of embracing and forgiving us. It is we who sometimes grow tired of asking for pardon. God never tires of forgiving us.
 3. In receiving forgiveness, we give the past over to God - and let it go. We all know people who find this hard to do. They keep revisiting past sins. Crucified by scruples, they worry they didn't confess properly last time or didn't include everything. The scrupulous aren't free. They've been so badly damaged by some event that they've been stuck ever since. Forgiveness sets us free, but not if we can't let go of the past. The challenge is to give the past over to God and live the present in love.
 4. In order to live the present in love, we must be able to forgive ourselves. We can find that hard to do, especially if there's something in our past we feel especially guilty about. If I can't forgive myself, it's going to be hard to forgive others. If God can forgive me, then I must forgive myself.
 5. Pope Francis described forgiveness as "a human right. The ability to be forgiven is a human right. We all have the right to be forgiven." In his letter on marriage and the family, Amoris laetitia (The Joy of Love), he says that pastors must "avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations" and must "be attentive to how people experience distress because of their condition." All of us have been looked upon with divine compassion," he writes. "We should hear God saying to us, 'Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'"
- Being compassionate, he continues, doesn't mean watering down church

DO

Is there somebody you need to forgive or with whom you need to be reconciled? Perhaps you could seek them out this week.

SAY

"The Lord is compassion and love."

PRAY

For the Christian, there can be no limit to mercy and forgiveness. Pray for the strength to forgive always.

LEARN

Mercy was at the heart of Jesus' ministry

Forgiveness sets us free

We must think of ourselves as an army of the forgiven

teaching. Jesus proposed a demanding ideal, but "never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery."

6. Conversion is always a work in progress. Pope Francis had a word for it: gradualism. In Amoris laetitia, he says that no one drops down from heaven perfectly formed; "families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love... All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families, and every family must feel this constant impulse."

My true self is something I must keep striving toward, turning from my old life to one like Christ's. My conversion is ongoing. I must work at being a better me, seeking to love more, forgive more, be kinder, more compassionate, more tolerant. I'll never be perfect, but I must keep trying. That's gradualism.

7. Forgiveness sets us free. To forgive is to stop wasting energy on resentment and grudges. In forgiving, I liberate myself to live. As Lewis Smedes put it in Forgive and Forget, "To forgive is to set a prisoner free and to discover that the prisoner was you." ■