

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 17, 2017

“Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against natural instinct to pay back evil with evil.” Pope John Paul II.

Every time we say the Our Father we beg God to forgive our sins, but then we get to the hard part! We don’t just ask God to forgive our sins, we ask Him to forgive our sins **as we forgive those who have sinned against us!** Yikes!

Today’s readings focus on our being loving and merciful to others so that we are worthy of God’s love and mercy. As Pope John Paul II said, “forgiveness is a decision of the heart. Forgiveness comes from love. Hate not your neighbor..., love one another as I have loved you, each of you forgives your brother from your heart”. The themes of love, mercy, and heartfelt forgiveness run through today’s readings.

The first reading tells us to let go of our wrath and our anger. Sometimes as humans, we want to hold onto our wrath and anger, especially if the sin against us cuts deeply or an apology never comes. The first reading reminds us to “Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.”

We are like the servant in the gospel, willing to receive the love and mercy of the Lord. What we must learn from the story is that we too, are expected to love and show mercy, even though it may go against our natural instincts.

“If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.” Mother Theresa. Wait, I thought forgiveness comes from love? Perhaps forgiving others is not so easy and takes a lot of practice; “not seven times but seventy-seven times.” At first forgiveness might not be given out of love for others, but with practice and the Lord’s kindness and mercy we may all come to forgive from a place of love.

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