September 13, 2026

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Written by THE FAITHFUL DISCIPLE

Sir 27:30—28:7 | Rom 14:7-9 | Mt 18:21-35

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

It strikes me that the real issue in the Gospel is that the first man whose debt the king forgives fails to see that his fellow servant who owes him a smaller debt is just like himself. "Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?" Sirach asks. I think we sometimes languish in unforgiveness because we think of others' wrongful actions as being somehow worse than ours. As a result, we hold others to a higher standard, while expecting people to easily excuse our failings. Perhaps the first step toward the radical forgiveness that Jesus calls us to in today's Gospel is to foster compassion for our fellow human beings. When we are wronged, it may be helpful to remind ourselves of the classic phrase, "There but for the grace of God, go I." When we recognize that those who wrong us have the same struggles as our own, we are more likely to extend the same mercy we wish to be offered to us.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

After the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II by Mehmet Ali Ağca in 1981, the future saint forgave his would-be assassin from his hospital bed, only four days after the shooting that nearly took his life. Later, the pope went to visit Ağca in prison, and the two spoke for more than 20 minutes. Since that time, John Paul's example has stood as a witness to the power of God at work in us; the strength to forgive, it is clear, comes not from ourselves, but from the Lord. Our willingness to receive God's grace and to extend forgiveness to others offers a powerful witness to the goodness of God, who is "kind and merciful, slow to anger and rich in compassion."

PRAY

Radical forgiveness is a challenging spiritual practice; it is not easy! To forgive as Christ calls us to requires that we cultivate an interior disposition of humility and compassion. This ancient prayer from St. Ephrem can help to open our hearts to overcome anger or judgment toward those who have wronged us: *Lord and Master of my life, spare me from the spirit of indifference, despair, lust for power, and idle chatter. Instead, bestow on me, your servant, the spirit of integrity, humility, patience and love. Yes, O Lord and King, let me see my own sins, and not judge my brothers and sisters for you are blessed for ever and ever. Amen.*