



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?”
Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

MATTHEW 18:21-22

Overview

God is merciful and always ready to forgive us. Jesus teaches us that we must also forgive others—not only once or twice, but repeatedly. Forgiveness does not mean that what happened was acceptable. It means asking Jesus to free our hearts from anger and help us choose love.

The readings for this Sunday invite us to reflect on one of the most challenging parts of Christian life: forgiveness. Sirach warns us that anger and resentment can take root in our hearts. If we desire God's mercy, we must also be willing to show mercy to others.

Psalms 103 reminds us why forgiveness is possible: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." God does not treat us according to our sins. Instead, God forgives, heals and offers us a new beginning. Our ability to forgive grows from remembering how often we have been forgiven.

Saint Paul reminds us that we do not live only for ourselves. We belong to Christ, and our words, decisions and relationships should reflect his love. Forgiveness is therefore more than a kind gesture; it is part of living as a disciple of Jesus.

In the Gospel, Peter asks Jesus whether forgiving someone seven times is enough. Jesus answers, "seventy-seven times." He is not asking Peter to keep count. He is teaching that forgiveness must become a way of life. The servant in the parable receives extraordinary mercy but refuses to offer even a small measure of mercy to another. Jesus challenges us to share the forgiveness we have received from God.

As we speak with children, we should acknowledge that forgiveness can be difficult and may take time. Forgiving does not mean pretending that nothing happened, accepting harmful behaviour or remaining in an unsafe situation. Children should always tell a trusted adult when someone hurts them. Forgiveness means asking Jesus to heal our hearts, free us from resentment and help us choose love rather than revenge.

Readings

First Reading

Sirach 27:30–28:7

A reading from the book of Sirach

Anger and wrath, these are abominations, yet a sinner holds on to them. The vengeful person will face the Lord's vengeance, for he keeps a strict account of their sins. Forgive your neighbour the wrong that is done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray.

Does anyone harbour anger against another, and expect healing from the Lord? If one has no mercy toward another like oneself, can one then seek pardon for one's own sins? If one who is but flesh harbours wrath, who will make an atoning sacrifice for that person's sins?

Remember the end of your life and set enmity aside; remember corruption and death, and be true to the commandments. Remember the commandments, and do not be angry with your neighbour; remember the covenant of the Most High and overlook faults.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

R. The Lord is merciful and gracious; slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits. **R.**

It is the Lord who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love
and mercy. **R.**

He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not
deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our
iniquities. **R.**

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love
toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far, he
removes our transgressions from us. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters: We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The word of the Lord.

Observe a period of silence after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Peter came and said to Jesus, Lord, how often should I forgive my brother or sister if they sin against me? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.

For this reason, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything. The lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, pay what you owe. Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, have patience with me, and I will pay you. But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt.

When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you? And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt.

So, my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Background

Sirach 27:30–28:7 warns that anger, resentment and vengeance damage our relationship with God and others. We cannot ask God for mercy while refusing to forgive our neighbour. Remembering our own weakness and mortality helps us let go of anger and live according to God's commandments. Forgiveness begins when we recognize how much we depend upon God's mercy.

Psalms 103 praises God as compassionate, patient and forgiving. God does not treat us according to our sins but removes them "as far as the east is from the west." God's mercy provides the model for our treatment of others. Because God continually offers us a new beginning, we are called to extend the same mercy to those who hurt us.

Romans 14:7–9 Saint Paul teaches that Christians do not live only for themselves: we belong to Christ in both life and death. Jesus died and rose so that he might be Lord of all. Because our lives belong to Christ, our choices and relationships should reflect his love. Forgiving others is one way we allow Jesus, rather than pride or resentment, to guide our lives.

Matthew 18:21–35 Peter asks whether forgiving seven times is sufficient—already a generous number. Jesus replies, "seventy-seven times," meaning that forgiveness should not be limited or counted. The parable contrasts the king's extraordinary mercy with the servant's refusal to forgive a much smaller debt. Having received God's limitless mercy, disciples are expected to show mercy to others. Forgiving "from the heart" is more than words; it is a sincere desire for healing and reconciliation. This does not excuse harmful behaviour, but it releases the desire for revenge and entrusts justice and healing to God.

Key Messages for Children

1. God always loves and forgives us.

Whenever we are sorry, God welcomes us and gives us a new beginning.

2. Jesus asks us to forgive others again and again.

We should not count how many times we forgive. We can ask Jesus to help us when forgiving is difficult.

3. Forgiveness helps heal our hearts.

Forgiving does not mean that hurting someone is acceptable. It means letting go of revenge and choosing the way of peace and love.

Key Messages for Leaders

1. Our forgiveness begins with God's mercy.

Remembering how generously God forgives us enables us to offer patience, compassion, and forgiveness to others.

2. Christian forgiveness is a continuing spiritual choice.

Jesus' command to forgive "seventy-seven times" means that forgiveness cannot be counted or limited. It may require prayer, time, and repeated decisions to let go of resentment.

3. Forgiveness must never minimize harm.

Forgiving does not excuse hurtful behaviour, remove consequences or require someone to remain unsafe. Leaders should help children seek support from a trusted adult while guiding them toward healing rather than revenge.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

1. How has my experience of God's mercy helped me to forgive someone who has hurt me?
2. How can my words and actions model forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation for the children I serve?

Takeaway

God forgives us, so we forgive others.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

At the proper moment, the priest invites the children to come forward. The leaders may come forward and stand facing the altar with the children. The priest then addresses the children.

Today, Jesus teaches us about forgiveness. Forgiving can be difficult, but Jesus is always ready to help us. Go with your leaders and listen to what Jesus teaches.

We will welcome you back soon.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW space, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome

The leaders help the children sit and prepare. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Let us quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(Silence for a few seconds.)

Loving God,

You are kind and merciful.

You forgive us whenever we are sorry.

**Open our ears to hear your Word
and open our hearts to forgive others.**

Help us share the love of Jesus.

with everyone we meet.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, at a minimum, proclaim the Gospel.

READINGS FOR CHILDREN

A reader proclaims the approved text below. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at least the Gospel, then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all the reading.

A reader must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children.

First Reading

Sirach

Anger and resentment can hurt our hearts.

If we want God to forgive us,
we must also forgive other people.

Remember that life is short.

Do not hold on to anger.

Remember God's commandments
and do not remain angry with your neighbour.

Remember that God loves you
and is always ready to show you mercy.

Brief Discussion

1. What can anger do to our hearts?
2. What does God ask us to let go of?
3. Who helps us forgive?

Response: The Lord is merciful and gracious.

Leader: Bless the Lord and remember all God's goodness.

All: The Lord is merciful and gracious.

Leader: God forgives us, heals us and surrounds us with love.

All: The Lord is merciful and gracious.

Leader: God is kind and patient and does not remain angry with us.

All: The Lord is merciful and gracious.

Leader: God takes our sins far away and gives us a new beginning.

All: The Lord is merciful and gracious.

Children, none of us live only for ourselves. When we live, we live for the Lord, and when we die, we belong to the Lord. Whether we are living or have died, we always belong to Jesus.

Christ died and rose to new life so that he might be Lord of everyone—both the living and the dead.

Brief Discussion

1. Who do we belong to?
2. Do we live only for ourselves?
3. How can we show by our words and actions that we belong to Jesus?

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times should I forgive someone who hurts me? Should I forgive that person seven times?" Jesus answered: "Not only seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Then Jesus told a story.

A servant owed a king a great deal of money. The servant could not repay it, so he begged, "Please be patient with me." The king felt sorry for him. He forgave the entire debt and allowed the servant to go free.

Later, that servant met another servant who owed him only a little money. The second servant begged, "Please be patient with me." But the first servant refused to forgive him.

When the king heard what had happened, he said, "I forgave you because you asked me. Should you not have shown the same mercy to your fellow servant?"

Jesus finished by teaching that God wants us to forgive one another from our hearts.

Brief Discussion

1. How many times did Jesus tell Peter to forgive?
2. What did the king do when his servant asked for mercy?
3. How can Jesus help us when it is difficult to forgive someone?

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

Important Information for CLoW leaders at the appropriate time:

What did you hear?

Have you ever made a mistake and needed to say, "I'm sorry"?

How did you feel when someone forgave you?

In today's Gospel, Peter asks Jesus, "How many times should I forgive someone? Seven times?" Peter thought seven times was a lot! But Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Do you think Jesus wants us to count every time we forgive?

Jesus means that we should keep trying to forgive—again.

Then Jesus tells a story about a king who forgave his servant a large debt. The servant must have felt happy and relieved. But when someone owed that servant a much smaller amount, he refused to forgive him.

Was the servant sharing the mercy he had received?

What should he have done?

God forgives us because God loves us. Jesus asks us to share that forgiveness with others.

Let us imagine that someone grabs a toy from you. What could you do?

- Grab it back?
- Yell at the person?
- Ask calmly for it back and tell an adult if you need help.

Which choice follows Jesus' way?

Forgiving someone does not mean it is okay to hurt them. If someone hurts us or makes us feel unsafe, we should always talk to a trusted adult. Forgiveness means we choose not to hurt them back.

Is forgiving always easy? Who can help us forgive?

Place a hand over your heart and repeat:

"Jesus, thank you for forgiving me. Help me forgive others."

Remember: God forgives us, so we forgive others.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray to the Lord.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The leader says:

Leader: Trusting in God's mercy, we offer our prayers.

Our response is: Lord, help us to forgive.

1. For the Church, that it may show God's mercy to everyone, we pray:
Lord, help us to forgive.
2. For world leaders, that they may overcome anger and work together for peace, we pray: Lord, help us to forgive.
3. For people who have been hurt, that God may comfort and heal them, we pray: Lord, help us to forgive.
4. For our families and friends, that we may say, "I am sorry" and forgive one another, we pray: Lord, help us to forgive.
5. For anyone we find difficult to forgive, that Jesus may give us patient and loving hearts, we pray: Lord, help us to forgive.

Invite the children to add their own intentions.

Closing Prayer

Merciful God,
you forgive us and give us new beginnings.
Take away the anger in our hearts
and help us forgive one another.
May our words and actions
bring peace to our families,
our school and our parish.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.

Please note that the Handouts are available at:

Bulletin: TheKidsBulletin.com – Goodwill donation suggested
Quiz Handout provided by: thewordthisweek.net



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Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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Canadian Conferences of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, Canada, 2009.

New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition

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