24th Sunday in Ordinary Time, September 13, 2026

Sirach 27:30-28:9 - Those who seek God's mercy must be merciful toward others.

Romans 14:7-9 - We belong to the Lord.

Matthew 18:21-35 - Jesus teaches that we must forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

When Mercy Becomes Our Story:

Sirach: "If you forgive someone who has wronged you, your sins will be forgiven when you pray. You cannot expect the Lord to pardon you while you hold a grudge against someone else. You yourself are a sinner, and if you won't forgive another person, you have no right to pray that the Lord will forgive your sins. If you cannot get rid of your anger, you have no hope of forgiveness—you are only a human being" (Sirach 28:2-5).

Peter thinks he is being generous. He asks Jesus, "How often must I forgive? Seven times?" Since forgiving three times was commonly regarded as sufficient, Peter thinks seven is very generous. Jesus says, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times." What! 77 times! Peter tried to quantify forgiveness. But Jesus is not giving Peter a bigger number; rather, He is changing Peter's definition of generosity.

What If God Kept Score of You? Imagine if God counted our daily faults; all the impatience, all the judgments, all the gossip, all the criticism, pride, resentment, selfishness, all the neglected prayers, the refusals to apologize, and the times we know what is right but choose ourselves instead. Think about how many times we have promised to change and still fall. Yet God has not given up on us. I talk to you as I talk to myself, too. Perhaps we forget how much God forgives us because His mercy comes so easily - we are constantly loved, forgiven, and given another chance. Yet we remember every detail of what others do to us. If we kept score of how often God forgives us, we would not have time to keep score of others' faults.

That's why Jesus tells the story: Jesus tells of a servant whose master forgives an enormous, unpayable debt, yet that same servant immediately demands payment of a much smaller debt from someone else. This story now becomes a mirror. He remembered what was owed to him but forgot what had been forgiven in him. And that is the danger. We can have excellent memories of others' failures and sins, yet very short memories of the mercies God continually shows us.

Mercy Changes How You See People: When I remember how much God has forgiven me, I begin to see other people's failures differently. This is not because their actions do not matter or because forgiveness means tolerating abuse, insults, disrespect, or hurt. No. This is because I realize: "I am not standing above this person; I am standing beside them as another sinner living

by God's mercy." God sees our failures, yet He does not define us by our worst moments. Mercy teaches us to look at others the same way. We call that generosity.

25 years later, memories of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks remain vivid for those who lived through them, defined by pain, shock, confusion, and a profound sense of shared national grief.

Peter thought generosity meant giving someone seven chances, but Jesus says, "Peter, you're still counting the numbers." The lesson from Jesus is clear. Generosity is not about counting numbers. True generosity begins when we remember how generously God has forgiven us and allow His mercy to shape how we treat others. Keeping a mental ledger or tracking others' past mistakes and grievances does not help our lives. Some spiritual fresh air is good for your health and well-being.

Today, bring that person before the Lord in prayer. We do not have to pretend we were not hurt, nor do we have to say what happened was right. Simply ask God for the grace to release the person from the prison of our hearts. Sometimes forgiveness begins not with a feeling but with a decision: "Lord, I do not yet feel ready to forgive, but today I choose to forgive. Give me the grace to mean what I am saying." May the Divine Mercy pass through us to our families, our communities, and even to those who may have hurt us. The disciple of Christ who understands mercy does not say, "I forgive because you deserve it." He/she says, "I forgive because I myself have been forgiven."

So today, ask yourself: Whose score am I still keeping? Jesus invites us to put down the scorecard—not because the hurt doesn't matter, but because keeping score is not His way. May we stop counting their failures and start remembering God's mercies. When we remember how generously God has dealt with us, mercy stops being something we simply receive and becomes our own story.

May the Lord remove the bitterness from our hearts. May He give us the courage to forgive, the wisdom to set healthy boundaries when necessary, and the grace to always remember how much we have received from Him. The mercy we receive from God is not meant to end with us. The mercy we receive is the mercy we must give. Amen. God bless you.

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