

Pastoral Reflection
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 12-13, 2026

Could anyone refuse mercy to another, and seek pardon for his or her own sins?

In her homily last weekend, Sr. Lynne reminded us of Sr. Margaret's comments at the assembly: we need to be humble and remember that St. Cronan does not have a corner on mercy or good works.

This week's readings remind us that mercy extends not just to our own community members but also to anyone who might harm us. We cannot harbor anger and expect God's mercy on us. Jesus tells us we must infinitely forgive (seventy-seven times!).

This is a tough time to be contemplating forgiveness. The twenty-fifth anniversary of 9/11 reminds us of the loss of so many lives at the Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania at the hands of "terrorists". We see the injustice of war in Ukraine, Iran, Palestine and so many other nations. We are reminded of the devastation caused by climate change at the hands of climate deniers. We are devastated at the inhumane treatment of migrants and refugees, the poor, and those in war-torn areas throughout the world, often at the hands of our own government. Are those inflicting these sufferings worthy of forgiveness? Seventy-seven times forgiveness?

Last week God told us through Ezechiel that it is our responsibility to "turn the wicked from their evil ways...". This week God tells us we must forgive them as well. When there seems to be so much devastation, what is God asking of us?

I believe God, through Jesus, is telling us to love, to love our neighbors as ourselves. It may take God's time, and not ours, but love is stronger than anything our "enemies" have to offer. Paul tells the Romans, "None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." Jesus asks us to forgive our brothers and sisters, to love one another, so that we live in the Lord. Not an easy lesson to carry out, but with the help of the Eucharist, we can leave our animosities at the altar and, with Jesus' help, learn the hard lesson of forgiveness.

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