

## Homily for the Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Year A

Forgiving those who have hurt us is not easy. The bigger the hurt the more difficult it is to forgive and for many people also the longer it takes to forgive. Peter, it seems from his question in the Gospel today, also found it difficult to forgive. (Matt 18:21) He asked Jesus, “Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?” It could give the impression that Peter was finding it difficult to forgive. Jesus said to Peter to forgive not seven times but seventy-seven times. (Matt 18:21) Jesus is saying we are not to hold any grudges. Holding grudges, being angry and resentful, storing up anger in our hearts, is very unhealthy. It can eat into a person. I read earlier this week that anger is one factor contributing to heart disease. We are to forgive seventy-seven times. We could look at it like this. Somebody did us a great injustice in the past. Every time we meet that person or think of that person we have feelings of revenge or resentment or anger. Forgiving seventy-seven times is thinking thoughts of forgiveness every time we meet that person or think of that person. Forgiving seventy-seven times is breaking the cycle of thinking revengefully and instead thinking forgivingly.

Is there anything that can help us to forgive those who have hurt us? Forgiveness is a decision. Decide today to forgive. Forgiveness does not mean blotting out [painful memories](#) but it means not acting out of them. That is why when the hurt is deep, counseling may be necessary to free us from acting out of past negative experiences. Think of the parable in the Gospel today (Matt 18:21-35). The king forgave the servant who owed ten thousand talents. God has forgiven us the sin of Adam because of the death of Jesus. Then in the parable that servant was owed the very small sum of 100 denarii (one hundred days wages) but did not forgive. God has forgiven each of us ten thousand talents (164,000 years of wages). We are asked to forgive just 100 denarii (100 days wages) when others offend us.

Another help to forgive somebody is to be humble enough to admit that we cannot control another person in the sense of expecting an apology from the other. Giving up the need to control or dominate the person who hurt us, surrendering the need to expect them to ask forgiveness from us, frees us to forgive them. In this Mass today we celebrate Jesus dying on Calvary for us. Because of his death on Calvary the debt of 10,000 talents we owed God has been forgiven. We go from here and forgive those who owe us 100 denarii.