

FORGIVE IF WE EXPECT FORGIVENESS AFTER DEATH

In today's Gospel (Matt 18:21-35) Jesus urges us to open ourselves courageously to the power of forgiveness. As Christians, we are to imitate God's mercy while living on earth. Forgiveness brings reconciliation and healing to a broken heart with each other and with Jesus. The world could be spared much sufferings, if forgiveness and mercy became our lifestyle. The Gospel parable helps us to understand that the merciful Lord places conditions on granting His mercy on Judgement Day. We need to ponder more on the words of the His prayer: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us* (Mt 6:12). These words of Jesus contain a decisive truth, in that, we cannot demand God's forgiveness for ourselves, if we, like the steward, refuse to show forgiveness to others. It is necessary to apply merciful love in all human relationships, including family, business and within our communities. While God's Love is unconditional, His Mercy is conditional. We must forgive our enemies without holding a grudge. The number 'seven' in Jewish tradition was the symbol of perfection.

ANGER AND RESENTMENT ONLY FOUND IN SINNERS

The inability to forgive comes from our ego, when we adopt an exaggerated sense of self-importance. When we mistakenly think that our lives belong to us, then we tend to cling to resentment, anger, and pride, especially when our dignity has been compromised. When we realise that our life does not belong to us, (Rom 14:7-9) but *belongs to the Lord*, who created us, then we should exercise forgiveness towards others, in relation to God's forgiveness towards us. It is vital that we go to confession now, in order to receive divine mercy, before we meet the Lord beyond the grave. Forgiveness received in confession restores our hearts with the virtues of Peace and Patience. Without these virtues we can never be a channel of Christ's Grace. When we come to the realisation, how our sins seriously offend, insult, hurt and inflict unimaginable pain on Jesus, and yet, He forgives us, when we ask Him through confession, only then, do we begin to understand what true forgiveness is, and to go and give (for-give) this talent we possess to others. First Reading (Ecc 27:33-28:9), informs us that the person who stubbornly nurses anger against another, while living on earth, should not expect mercy from God beyond the grave. People *who exact vengeance will experience the vengeance of the Lord* on the Day of Judgement. To live by the Ten Commandments is to love God and to love each other. We must begin to understand that our stubborn inability to forgive, comes from our disordered love of self. This idolising of self, places ourselves above God who is merciful Love. Going to Confession with a contrite heart brings us God's divine mercy now. Fr Brendan.