

Roman Missal, 3rd edition

Homily Notes 2



10th/11th September — 24th Sunday of the Year

Lectionary	Liturgy Notes
<p>Ecclesiasticus 27:30-28:7 <i>Forgive your neighbour the hurt that he does you, and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.</i></p> <p>Ps 102: 1-4, 9-12 r.8 <i>The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.</i></p> <p>Rom 14: 7-9 <i>Alive or dead we belong to the Lord</i></p> <p>Matt 18:21-35 <i>I do not tell you to forgive seven times, but seventy seven times.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used with handouts 'I confess' and 'Lord have mercy'. • The 'I confess' form of the penitential act might be used..

Which is harder, to forgive someone who has hurt us or to ask forgiveness?

Perhaps Saint Peter was thinking of situations in which he had been hurt or offended and found forgiveness difficult. When we hear of those who have been hurt dreadfully by others or have seen their loved ones suffer we can only guess at how hard they must find it to forgive. We hesitate naturally to tell them what to do or to judge them.

Today Jesus speaks to us in his parable reminding us that we all have debts and depend upon the mercy of others. How then can we refuse others? The first step in learning to forgive is to remember we need it ourselves.

In the Penitential Act at the beginning of Mass we pause to acknowledge our sins. In doing this we stop for a moment and recognize ourselves. This is not about becoming depressed with our mistakes but remembering that we come before God as people of hope looking for healing.

The translation of one of the forms we can use has changed. The Church invites us to pray the 'I confess' to remind us how we can go astray and how it affects others. This prayer reminds us of the social aspect of sinning. It affects everyone and in asking for their prayers I also ask that they will forgive.

The 'I confess' draws out three ways in which we can sin - in our thoughts, in our words and in our deeds.

In our thoughts - sometimes we can convince ourselves that it does not matter what we think as long as we don't put our thoughts into action. If we reflect for a moment we realize that our attitudes shape our behaviour and real responsibility starts with the reasons that are behind our sin.



In our words - words can sometimes cause a great deal of damage. In the 'I confess' we remember how we should use only helpful words that build others up. Many people can remember a kind word that can help us cope with the most difficult situations. Harsh words wound for a long time.

In our deeds - it is not just our actions that can hurt others but sometimes our inaction. Refusing to step in and put something right can be wrong and in this prayer we admit the times we neglected the needs of others.

The new translation has us say 'through my fault, through my fault, through my grievous fault'. This mention of the word 'fault' three times helps to underline these three different ways of thought, word and deed in which we can go wrong. Also this repetition is designed to help us really admit our failings rather than pass over them quickly. We strike our breast once and perhaps we might hold our hand there that little bit longer as we really think.

The other forms of the Penitential Act have a different feel to them. Perhaps we might notice that the one with 'Lord have mercy etc' does not simply talk about our sorrow for our sin. It actually concentrates on what Jesus does for us. Listen to the lines 'You were sent to heal the contrite of heart, You came to call sinners, You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us.' These words should give us comfort. No matter what I may have thought, said, done or not done, the mercy and love of Jesus will overcome it all.

We can also notice that it is now called a Penitential Act. This is a brief moment at the beginning of Mass when we acknowledge our sins, ask forgiveness and think of wonderful things Jesus does for us. A more serious self-examination is appropriate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation which can bring about a deep healing of our hearts and celebrate the gift of forgiveness in a profound way.

Which is harder, to forgive or to ask forgiveness? The two go hand-in hand.