

LIVING FAITH

24th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
SEPTEMBER 13, 2026



THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY—Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, how often should I forgive my brother or sister if they sin against me? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.”

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay his lord ordered him to sell everything he had and pay what he owed. The slave fell on his knees saying, ‘have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ The lord released that slave and forgave him the debt.

“But that same slave, as he went out came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell on his knees and pleaded with him, ‘Have pity on me and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him in prison until he would pay the debt.

When the lord heard all that had taken place, he summoned the slave and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on you fellow slave as I had mercy on you?’ In anger his lord handed him over to be punished until he would pay his entire debt.

“So my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

Our word for today is FORGIVENESS. When someone hurts you in some way, it is often very difficult to say “I forgive you” and really mean it. Real forgiveness is not just words; real forgiveness comes from the heart – and sometimes it takes a very long time to truly forgive. Nevertheless, Jesus call us to keep trying; in fact he calls us to keep forgiving over and over again.

Peter things he is being very generous when he suggests to Jesus that he would be ready to forgive someone seven times. He quite taken aback when Jesus says, “No, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” In other words, Jesus says there should be no limit to forgiving others. And that is because there is no limit to God’s forgiving us. We should forgive others as we *have been* forgiven by God – over and over again.

Forgiveness, says a well-known author, is the love offered to another who is wounded, vulnerable, fearful and who has broken the unity. Suppose you are the one needing forgiveness; you know how you feel: awkward, embarrassed, vulnerable, fearful. When the other person loves you anyhow – that’s forgiveness. It is an act of love the brings people back together again. Because we are broken people in a broken world, love often takes the form of forgiveness.



TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Tell about a time when you had to forgive someone OR when you received forgiveness.
- Is Jesus’ invitation to ‘endless forgiveness’ realistic? Why or why not?
- Can you see yourself in any of the figures in Jesus’ parable of the king and the two slaves? OR Do you know someone who reminds you of one of those figures?

Keep On Forgiving

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet. Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
W	B	U	M	Y	J	E	L	F	P	S	G	V	K	C	D	Q	T	X	I	N	O	R	A	H	Z

1. 11-20-21 _____
2. 9-22-23-12-20-13-7 _____
3. 24-11-14 _____
4. 24-21-11-1-7-23 _____
5. 10-7-18-7-23 _____
6. 2-23-22-18-25-7-23 _____
7. 11-7-13-7-21 _____
8. 6-7-11-3-11 _____

FORGIVE BROTHER	SIN ASK	JESUS ANSWER	SEVEN PETER
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Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

(Prayer for Peace)

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love; where
there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may not so
much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal
life.*

IN OUR LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK

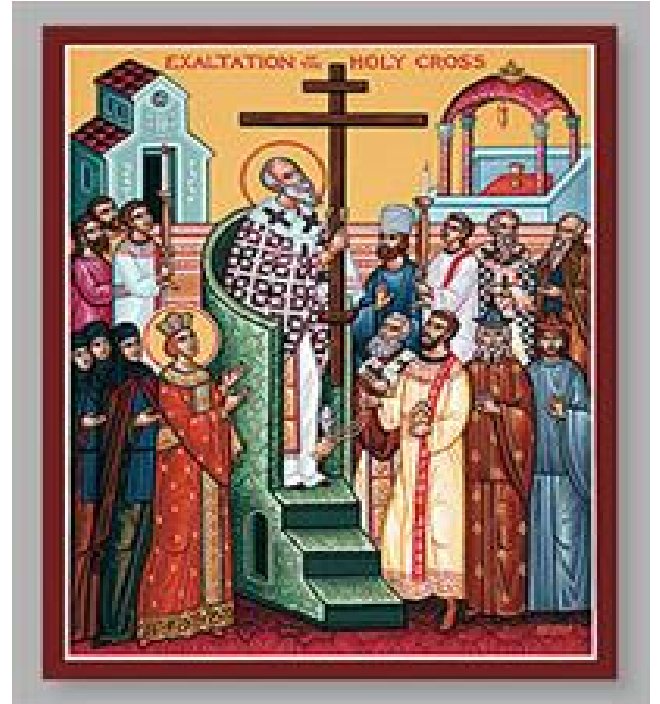
SEPTEMBER 14

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

Early in the fourth century, Saint Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine, went to Jerusalem in search of the holy places of Christ's life. She had the second-century Temple of Aphrodite, which had been built on the site held by tradition to have been built over the Savior's tomb. Her son built the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher on that site. During the excavation, workers found three crosses. Legend has it that they were able to identify the one on which Jesus died when its touch healed a dying woman.

The cross immediately became an object of veneration. At a Good Friday celebration in Jerusalem toward the end of the fourth century, according to an eyewitness, the wood was taken out of its silver container and placed on a table. The eyewitness wrote, "all the people pass through one by one; all of them bow down, touching the cross and the inscription, first with their foreheads, then with their eyes; and, after kissing the cross, they move on."

To this day, the Churches, Catholic and Orthodox alike, celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on the September anniversary of the basilica's dedication. The feast entered the liturgical calendar in the seventh century after Emperor Heraclius recovered the cross from the Persians, who had carried it off in 614, 15 years earlier. According to the story, the emperor intended to carry the cross back into Jerusalem himself, but was unable to move forward until he took off his imperial garb and became a barefoot pilgrim.



The cross is today the universal image of Christian belief. Countless generations of artists have turned it into a thing of beauty to be carried in procession or worn as jewelry. To the eyes of the first Christians, it had no beauty. It stood outside too many city walls, decorated only with decaying corpses, as a threat to anyone who defied Rome's authority—including Christians who refused sacrifice to Roman gods. Although believers spoke of the cross as the instrument of salvation, it seldom appeared in Christian art unless disguised as an anchor or the Chi-Rho. This changed in the fourth century, after Constantine's edict of toleration was issued.

