

PARISH OF BLESSED JAMES BELL

*Serving St Benedict's, St Mary's & St Oswald's,
Warrington*



24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

13th September 2020

Entrance Procession

Music: Praise my soul the King of heaven

Collect (from Mass in Time of Pandemic)

Almighty and eternal God,
our refuge in every danger,
to whom we turn in our distress;
in faith we pray
look with compassion on the afflicted,
grant eternal rest to the dead, comfort to mourners,
healing to the sick, peace to the dying,
strength to healthcare workers,
wisdom to our leaders
and the courage to reach out to all in love,
so that together we may give glory to your holy name.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen.

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading (Ecclesiasticus 27: 33-28: 9)

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus

Resentment and anger, these are foul things,
and both are found with the sinner.
He who exacts vengeance will experience the
vengeance of the Lord,
who keeps strict account of sin.
Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you,
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.
If a man nurses anger against another,
can he then demand compassion from the Lord?
Showing no pity for a man like himself,
can he then plead for his own sins?
Mere creature of flesh, he cherishes resentment;
who will forgive him his sins?
Remember the last things, and stop hating,
remember dissolution and death,
and live by the commandments.
Remember the commandments,
and do not bear your neighbour ill-will;
remember the covenant of the Most High,
and overlook the offence.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

Psalm 103

**R. The Lord is kind and merciful,
slow to anger, and rich in compassion.**

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.
- 2 He pardons all your iniquities,
heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
crowns you with kindness and compassion.

Gospel Acclamation (Lourdes)

Gospel

(Matthew 18: 21-35)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.'

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you." But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Bidding Prayers

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Preparation of the Gifts

Music: Adoramus Te, Christe – Dubois

Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, O Lord, the gifts we offer
in this time of peril.

May they become for us, by your power,
a source of healing and peace.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Eucharistic Acclamations

Sanctus En Fa Majeur – Lourdes

The Mystery of Faith

**When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.**

Communion Rite

Music: Ubi caritas – Bob Hurd

Prayer after Communion

O God, from whose hand we have received
the medicine of eternal life,
grant that through this sacrament
we may glory in the fullness of heavenly healing.
Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

Concluding Rite

Distribution of Communion

Music: Soul of my Saviour (Anima Christi)

Acknowledgements

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Reflection on the Gospel

By Fr Chris Thomas

Director of the Irenaeus Project

Frankie is a drug addict. His parents broke up when he was very small, and he was unable to cope living first with one and then the other. He was a vulnerable, anxious child, insecure and frightened. He entered into his teenage years and became extremely difficult to handle. He was aggressive and violent.

His parents who loved him very much were unable to control him. He was expelled from school and was educated in a special unit which made him, sadly, more difficult. As Frankie's life spiralled into chaos, he began to take drugs, so called soft ones at first, and then harder ones as time went on. Over the last twenty years he has been in and out of rehabilitation centres paid for by his Dad. He has been in prison several times for dealing to finance his habit.

Each time Frankie has been in prison his Dad has said the same thing, 'No more!' Yet each time he has come out of prison, his Dad has paid again for specialist rehabilitation. When that has finished, his Dad has found him a job working within the family firm and a flat to live in. It does not matter what Frankie does, and despite his own protestations at times, his Dad is always there for him. I asked Ed, Frankie's Dad, what would have to happen for him to give up on his son. He looked me straight in the eye and said 'I often wish I could say and mean this is the last time, but he's my son. Only death would make me give up on him. I love him more than I love myself.'

Ed showed me something powerful during that conversation. He helped me to sense the presence of God. It seems to me that forgiveness is a mystery to be found in the heart of humanity. It is caught up with the reality of love. It is a facet of love and whenever we experience forgiveness, we get a tiny glimpse of the reality of a God who has forgiven humanity and every individual.

We are forgiven for the mess we make of our own lives, the lives of others and the life of this planet that we have been given. That's what we see in the action of the king in releasing his steward. The transformative moment is when we begin to realise it and begin to see who God is. In the face of such immensity, and aware of our own smallness and pettiness all we can do is say thank you and live lives of forgiveness ourselves.

The whole of chapter 18 of Matthew's gospel is a reflection on how we're to live and our main characteristic is to be forgiveness. You have the story of the lost sheep and this parable of the unforgiving servant as well as the way to deal with those who sin against the community that we listened to last week. It's constant forgiveness and mercy and compassion. Yet so many of us act like the steward in the Gospel. He was willing to accept the forgiveness of his master but not to allow forgiveness to flow through into the life of the one who owed him money. We can be willing to accept the forgiveness of God but not to allow that forgiveness to flow into the lives of others.

For the sake of the world we need to share and receive forgiveness as an illustration that it is possible and that it really is the only way to peace filled lives. It's a process and it's hard but we have within us the presence of God, the power of the spirit in whom we can do anything. I often think of the words of Corrie Ten Boom who was preaching in Germany about forgiveness and saw in the congregation an SS officer who had treated her sister Betsy very badly. She knew she had to forgive him and as she stood before him, she cried out within herself 'Lord, I can't do this but you can' and she found herself embracing him. I was once on a course where the leader told us that the greatest sign of the kingdom of God is forgiveness. God loves us and constantly pours out forgiveness upon us. One way of showing others that truth is to allow his forgiveness to flow through us into the lives of others.