

Great Saturday of the Light

The Rite of Forgiveness – Matthew 18:15-22

“Love for Lost Sheep” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time by Father Paul Campbell, LC Matthew 18:15-20 [Audio Version*](#))

Matthew 18:15-22

Jesus said to his disciples: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that ‘every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times”

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I come to you once again in prayer. Even though I cannot see you, my faith tells me that you are present. You are ready to listen and desire to speak with me. Your presence gives me hope, because you are the all-powerful God, the creator of heaven and earth. You are the source of all that is good in my life. Nothing happens to me without your knowing and permitting it. My hope leads me to love. I want to be one with you in mind and heart, identifying myself with your will and your standards.

Petition: Lord, help me to grow in my love for the Church and for souls.

1. **Go to the One Who Sins Against You:** Today’s text is part of a larger discussion that includes the preceding parable of the lost sheep. God wants us to love as he loves, even loving those whose sins may have directly harmed us in some way. This is hard. Sometimes we are not particularly forgiving and merciful towards those who sin. We can easily look down on them and imagine that we are much better than they, or we can become impatient that they are not like us. When someone sins against us,

we have to look beyond our pain. Indeed, we have to embrace that pain in the redemptive way that Christ shows on the cross and in the Eucharist. We should not write that person off as lost, turn our back or walk away. We should go to the one who sins against us and seek in love to bring him home to the Father's love.

2. **Reconcile Them to the Church:** God's love for the fallen sinner should not only be evident in our lives, but should also live in our local churches. Is our parish open and inviting to sinners, or has it become the last refuge for the saved? Does our church go and seek that lost sinner, or do we expect the lost sheep to find its own way to us? God wants us to go to the lost sinner and seek to bring him home to the Church. This means that we need to live as missionaries, as evangelists going out to the street corners and public squares, wherever the lost sinners may be. God loves them and wants to reach them through us. We are his hands and his feet; he wants to speak his words through our lips. How does God want me personally to become involved in this mission of the Church in my local parish?
3. **I Am in the Midst of You:** As we go out to fulfill Christ's mission toward lost sheep, he goes with us. We are not alone. He promised his disciples that he would be with them to the ends of the earth. This should give us confidence. Jesus is with us, and he is going to help transmit his love for some lost soul through us, through our words and gestures. He will give us the strength to carry on his work. There is also some benefit when we gather together with others in the Church as well. Jesus is present in the Church, where two or three are gathered in his name. We are with him to the degree we are united to the Church. As we become committed and involved in our local parish, we are closer to Jesus.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, move me to conquer my fears and complexes, my laziness and indifference, and to become engaged in the Church's mission to save souls. Don't let me blindly walk by the ones you love, the ones you shed your blood to redeem. Don't let my heart harden against them, but help me to go to them with your love and forgiveness.

Resolution: I will find a way to become engaged in the Church's mission of evangelization

**The Gospel read in the Maronite Church on the Saturday of the Great Light is Matthew 18:15-22; the Audio version and the meditation above are based on Matthew 18:15-20 and the ones below are based on Matthew 18:21-35*

“Unlimited Forgiveness” (Regnum Christi Meditation for Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time by Father David Daly, LC Matthew 18:21-35 [Audio Version](#))

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.”

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I believe that you came into this world to redeem sinners. I hope in you, and in your power to transform my soul, by your grace, from sinfulness to holiness. Lord, I love you and offer you the longings of my heart to put you truly first in my life. I want to love you with all my mind, heart, soul and strength.

Petition: Lord Jesus Christ, help me to forgive my brothers and sisters from the heart.

1. **Seventy-seven Times:** Jesus surprises Peter with this symbolic response. He surprises us, too, with the depth of his mercy. We, like Peter, think ourselves generous when we forgive our neighbors generously — seven times. But Jesus forgives in an unlimited manner — “seventy-seven” times — and teaches us to do the

same. This parable teaches us about God's unlimited mercy for each one of us. He calls us to imitate him in this characteristically Christian virtue.

2. **Have Patience with Me:** The servant who owes the master ten thousand talents represents each one of us before God. We owe everything to God and without his help we are totally unable to make up for our sins. Yet God in his mercy has chosen to forgive us.
In receiving God's patient love, our lives have been changed. We have new life because of Jesus Christ!
3. **You Wicked Servant:** Despite the great love we have received, sometimes we can be unforgiving toward our neighbors, just like the servant whose debt was pardoned. The forgiven servant becomes a wicked servant the moment he does not "forgive as he has been forgiven." How easy it is to forget God's love when we feel the pressure to "produce"! We become like that wicked servant, forgetting God and demanding a purely human justice from those around us — family, friends and business associates.

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, your lesson of forgiveness is very clear in this parable. You desire followers who imitate you, who will "love one another as you have loved them." Teach me this humility and gratitude that will lead me to patiently pardon all of those around me.

Resolution: Lord, today I promise to forgive at least one person who has offended me.