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## 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time - 20th February 2022

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## 20 February 2022

### Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

#### Introduction

In our readings this week there is an interesting match between our first reading from 1 Samuel and Luke's continuation of the sermon on the plain, both reflect on the nature of mercy and compassion. The Pauline second reading is not so closely aligned and allows for a reflection on the nature of the incarnation.

#### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you show us the mercy of the Father.  
Lord, have mercy.

You teach us to love our enemies.  
Christ, have mercy.

You are compassionate as your Father is compassionate.  
Lord, have mercy.

#### Collect

*Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that, always pondering spiritual things,  
we may carry out in both word and deed  
that which is pleasing to you.*

The collect for the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday has been long cherished and utilised in a variety of contexts across a wide range of missals. The first appearance of the oration is for when there is dissention and dispute in a monastery. The text is also closely related to the prayer for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, and perhaps reaches back to the contentious situations addressed in the Mass prayers composed by Pope Gelasius (d.496). The content of the prayer has remarkable simplicity and richness. The oration petitions God for the grace to meditate always on spiritual things. The collect for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday expresses this same thought when it refers to love that is 'true of heart'. These opening lines reflect a dynamic of continuous, unceasing prayer and reflection

upon the divine mandates, a practice extolled in the psalms. From this point the prayer moves to the qualities of our speech and our deeds.

The meaning of the prayer is that the whole life of the community, built on contemplative reflection and prayer first, but communication and action as well, be taken up in what is pleasing to God. It is concerned with the integrity of the faith, deeds and worship of the Christian community before God. The context of dissention in a monastic community highlights that the presence of disharmony serves notice to the community that they have acted and spoken in ways that are not pleasing to God and consequently have undermined the integrity of their faith, worship and love of neighbour.

## **First Reading**

**1 Samuel 26: 2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23**

Saul the King is delivered into the hands of David his enemy; however, the young fighter calls up a revised sense of mercy and an understanding of the rule of God.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

**Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13**

*The Lord is kind and merciful*

The psalm echoes David's sentiment in the first reading where he would not raise his hand against the Lord's anointed. We are urged not to forget the blessings of the Lord and to keep in mind God's compassion. This links to the gospel where we are urged to love our enemies and be compassionate as the Father is compassionate.

## **Second Reading**

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49**

Just as the divine one took on human flesh, the earthly Adam, so we who are the offspring of Adam are lifted to the level of the divine and bear the image of Christ.

## **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 6:27-38**

The centre piece of our reading is to be merciful as God is merciful, and from this all else follows.

## Reflection

In our readings this week there is an interesting match between our first reading from 1 Samuel and Luke's continuation of the sermon on the plain, both reflections on the nature of mercy. The Pauline second reading is not so closely aligned and allows for a reflection on the nature of the incarnation.

The extract from the Book of Samuel has a number of surprises. Our young warrior David is a wily soldier and a good theologian: he has wisdom beyond his years. One of the most valuable weapons of guerrilla warfare is fear. David knows this. His decision to leave Saul alive, yet to show him and his men how vulnerable he is – despite his army camped around him – is a masterstroke. David shows Saul that he is an enemy to be reckoned with, a good soldier, a wise leader and not simply bloodthirsty. Saul's kingship is no match for this, and the king's soldiers will revisit their unwavering fealty to him. David has sown doubt amongst Saul's soldiers and exposed Saul as a poor general, while allowing all to see his own qualities as a fearless and strategic leader.

If that is the wily military leader, where is the theologian? David recognises that he is in a dilemma. Saul is his enemy, and by all accounts God has put the doomed king at his mercy. But the son of Jesse sees the conundrum that this theological opinion places him in: God has delivered the anointed king to David for killing, yet to kill an anointed one of God is to disobey God. There are two parts to this particular episode, and David meets them both with wisdom. Firstly, he does not kill the anointed one of God, he does not disobey the rule of God, yet he does not spurn God's gift of delivering his enemy, Saul. Secondly, he upholds the supreme rule of divine protection – not killing God's anointed – because he himself aims to be king and needs to be a king under divine protection. If he kills Saul and abolishes the divine protective mandate, he will later be under threat of insurrection and death without that layer of security.

At this young age we see David, the daring and clear-headed soldier, the wily emerging leader, and the insightful theologian.

Our extract from Paul carries a different theme as it continues our series of texts from the Corinthian correspondence. Behind this theological play on the sense of 'Adam' is a profound sense of the incarnation and its meaning. Just as the divine one took on human flesh, the earthly Adam, so we who are so human are lifted to the level of the divine and bear the image of Christ.

The Gospel is so familiar to us that it does not bear too much commentary, however when set against the reading from the adventures of David the future king there are some important contrasts to bring out.

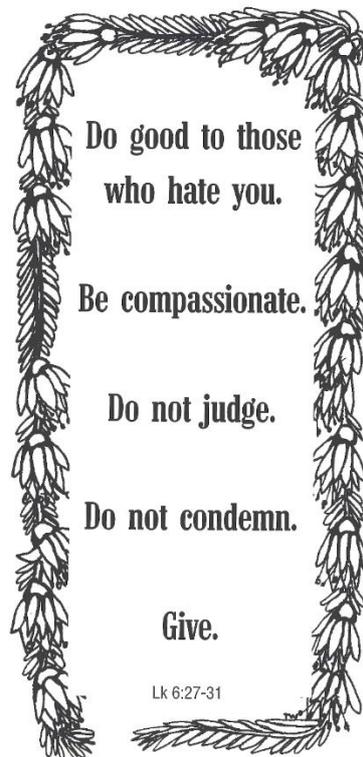
First up, the sermon is a continuation of the beatitudes. While we often grapple with the Sermon on the Plain as a set piece, it rolls on into this series of sayings. Like the Lucan beatitudes it is addressed to the assembled crowd, but it is worth keeping to the fore that this is the first address of Jesus to his chosen twelve. The entire

Christian community falls under this set of admonitions together. It is a leadership code as well as a discipleship code.

The teachings are unexpected and contrary to both religious and social practice. We saw above in the narrative of David sparing Saul that there was a sense of wisdom, cunning and theological correctness to the young warrior's actions. David acted to a high standard and pushed against blood vengeance and violence for its own effect. There was also a degree of calculation about it, again a mixture of humanity, cunning and wisdom, all aligned to good effect.

The sayings of Jesus move the discussion to a different level. The centre piece is to be merciful as God is compassionate, and from this all else follows. There is no calculus to engage with, and no political points to be scored. The standard for Christians is to look at the world as God does, love all as God does, and from this it flows to be merciful as God is. Yes, gifts will be given, but these are not rewards or bribes or favours. Rather, to be in the heart and mind of God is to take pleasure in all as God does. This love is its own reward.

The question for us is not which of these many points we take up, but rather the larger question. Do we recognise our church here? Do we recognise ourselves here!



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

Trusting in the loving mercy and kindness of God, we present our petitions.

## Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and his brother Bishops that they will show the face of God to the world through their example as they journey together towards the Synod in 2023.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our civic leaders, that they will govern with mercy and compassion particularly as we all struggle with the problems of climate change and the pandemic, along with bushfires, floods and drought.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those burdened by unforgiveness, that God may open their hearts and grant them healing from their pain so that they will reunite with their families and loved ones.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our own community, that through God's grace we will be abundantly forgiving, loving and generous and be compassionate as our Father is compassionate.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are suffering illness, loneliness, shame and despair. May their needs be recognised by those around them, and compassion be shown to them.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all of us gathered here. May we continue to pray and work towards being a Christ-centred and missionary Church and make a difference in our world.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Loving Father, we know that you hear the needs of the community gathered before you, and so graciously grant us all that we ask. Through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

### GA

A new commandment. Anon. 318  
A trusting psalm. K. Bates SM. 455  
Christians, let us love one another. Fr A. Nigro and Sr M. Claudia Folz/ French Carol  
Melody. 206  
Jesus, in your heart we find. J. P. McAuley/R. Connolly. 464  
Love is his word. L. Connaughton/A. Milner. 462  
No greater love. M. Joncas. 460  
The servant song. R. Gillard. 487  
This is my will my one command. J. Quinn SJ/ Gregorian Chant. 465

### AOV1

A trusting psalm. K. Bates SM. 115  
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78  
Strong and constant. F. Andersen MSC. 110

### AOV2

The servant song. R. Gillard. 169

### AOVK

A child's prayer. D. Halloran. 111  
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

### CWB

A new commandment I give unto you. John 13: 34, 35. 615  
Forgive our sins as we forgive. Rosamond E. Herklots. 680  
Jesus, in your heart we find. James Phillip McAuley. 724

### CWBII

*Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions*  
Forgive our sins as we forgive. Rosamond E. Herklots. 120  
Jesus, in your heart we find. James Phillip McAuley. 397  
A new commandment. John 13: 34, 35. 443  
Lord of all nations, grant me grace. Olive W. Spannaus. 542  
Where there is charity and love. Richard Connolly. 638  
*Additional selections by Chris deSilva*  
Return to God. Marty Haugen. 298  
There's a wideness in God's mercy. Frederick William Faber. 624  
What does the Lord require. Albert Frederick Bayly. 642

### S&S2

Break my heart. Jennifer Martin. 380

### Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 102: *The Lord is kind and merciful.*  
Psalm 103: The Lord is kind and merciful: Christopher Willcock. GA 61  
Psalm 103 (102): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 30  
The Lord is kind and merciful: Paul Mason. PM pg. 78  
The Lord is kind and merciful. LPC Marty Haugen pg. 101

### Music selections by Michael Mangan

A life of love (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Gifts]