

1-12-2024

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time - 23 February 2025

Anthony Doran

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#### Recommended Citation

Doran, Anthony. "Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time - 23 February 2025." *Pastoral Liturgy* 55, no. 1 (2024): 1-5.  
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol55/iss1/21>

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# 23 February 2024

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

### Introduction

One of the great themes of Luke's Gospel is reversal: the mighty are cast down, the little ones lifted up. Jesus takes us a little further this Sunday: modelling ourselves on our compassionate Father, we must love our enemies and do good to those who hate us.

### 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.

*Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.*

## **First Reading**

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

David shows mercy to his one-time-friend-turned-adversary, Saul. Presented with the opportunity, instead of killing him while he slept, David shows mercy to the Lord's anointed.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

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

*The Lord is kind and merciful*

This psalm is a vibrant hymn, calling the faithful to praise the Lord for his forgiveness, for his love and compassion, for the richness of his mercy.

## **Second Reading**

**1 Corinthians 15:45-49**

This reading is a meditation contrasting Adam and Christ: on earth, we are earthly like Adam. But in heaven, we will be like Christ, for we are modelled on him.

## **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 6:27-38**

Following Luke's version of the Beatitudes which we read last Sunday, today we read Jesus' exhortation to his listeners on the Plain: we must love our enemies and bless those who curse us. Our model for this is no less than the Father who is compassionate to the fullest of measures, overflowing and poured into our lap.

## **Reflection**

Vengeance is a fairly typical human emotion. When someone does the dirty on us, a lot of the time, we want to get back at them. Most of us, from time-to-time, tend to think like this.

But it is not just our present generation who are victims of these emotions. Strangely, we often find in the pages of Sacred Scripture these sorts of emotions expressed.

It got to such a stage that it became institutionalised in the Law of Moses. In the regulations of the Pentateuch, there are rules about *how much* vengeance was allowed for certain crimes and transgressions. So that vengeance did not get out of hand, the rights of asylum were also instituted. Places of refuge to which a person escaping from punishment could flee. But still, these rights of asylum were only instituted to counter the vengeance.

The widespread resort to vengeance in the pages of Scripture is what makes today's first reading so remarkable. Because David decides *not* to take vengeance on Saul. David and Abishai find Saul asleep. But despite the urging of Abishai, David refuses to kill Saul as he slept. David had become an outlaw. He was in fear of his life from Saul who had become jealous of David's growing popularity. This, at the expense of his own waning reputation. Saul had made several attempts on David's life to this point. And twice, David spares the life of Saul. The story we read today is the second time when Saul's life is spared by David. David had the chance to exact his vengeance on Saul, but instead, he spares the life of Saul.

Today, we continue our reading of Luke's Gospel. And we are still hearing from the *Sermon on the Plain*. Last week, we heard the series of contrasts in Luke's version of the Beatitudes. How those who are poor, or hungry, or who weep, or who are hated are happy or blessed in the Kingdom of God. And how those who are rich, or satisfied, or who laugh now or who are liked in this world will not come out on top in the coming Kingdom of God.

Jesus takes us a little further in today's Gospel Reading. For not only are we asked, like David, not to take vengeance on our enemies. Now, Jesus is asking his followers to *love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly*. We are asked to respond to injury or unjust demand with nothing more than generosity. To respond by abandoning any claim we might have to retribution.

But, of course, this makes no sense, does it? How can we love our enemies? Come on Jesus, really? This makes no sense.

Of course, these are the answers we make we when hear these words of Jesus with the ears of the world. The words of Jesus which we hear this week – like the Beatitudes of last week – are highly provocative. For they ask us to go against all that makes sense. All that seems so right. And this is what is *highly dangerous* about the words of Jesus. When we hear them well, they are truly revolutionary. Far more seductive than the words of Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong or Osama Bin Laden.

The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Plain ask us to have a new vision, quite different from this world. And in the coming Kingdom of God, the vision of Jesus Christ *is indeed very* different to the vision of this world. And when we run counter to the wisdom of this world, when we give and forgive and love, we find much given back to us. *This* is where we find full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

As the psalmist declares, the Lord is kind and merciful. And so, in hope we offer our needs and the needs of the world.

## Petitions

We pray for all the leaders of our Church that their witness to the gospel may lead us in our synodal journey through this year of jubilee.

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

We pray for leaders in politics, corporations, education and all powerful entities. May they see that compassion is necessary in leading people to true peace.

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

We pray for those whose hearts are full of vengeance. May they come to know that only love will bring them peace and comfort.

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

We pray for all of us gathered here that we may let go of vengeance, judgemental ways and hate. May we all be formed in the gospel and open to Jesus' call to love our enemies.

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

We pray for the elderly and house bound people in our community. May they not be forgotten and be nurtured with compassion.

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

We pray for all those who have died, particularly in violent conflict. May they be at peace at last.

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

## Conclusion

God of compassion, you hear the prayers of all your people and so we pray in Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C (23 February 2025)

Title	AOV	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
A child's prayer			111			
A new commandment				615	443	318
A trusting psalm	115				293	455
Christians, let us love one another				648	469	206
Forgive our sins as we forgive				680	120	
Jesus, in your heart we find				724	397	464
Lord of all nations, grant me grace					542	
Love is his word				743		462
No greater love						460
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven	78			789	588	392
Return to God					298	304
Strong and constant	110			812	515	487
The servant song		169				487
There's a wideness in God's mercy				838	624	
This is my will my one command				842	626	465
We are children of the living God						15
What does the Lord require					642	
Where there is charity and love				863	638	323

Title	S&S2
Break my heart	380

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

**Psalm 102:** *The Lord is kind and merciful.*

	GA	JOBC	LPC	PM1
Psalm 102	61	pg. 30	pg. 101	pg. 78

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

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