

Again this year we offer you these reflections on the Sunday Gospel. I hope that they might help you to integrate God's Word into your daily life.

Fr. Jim McDougall

Pastor

GOSPEL FOR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH

+ A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew

Peter came up and asked Jesus, "Lord, when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive him? Seven times?" "No," Jesus replied, "not seven times; I say, seventy times seven times. That is why the reign of God may be said to be like a king who decided to settle accounts with his officials. When he began his auditing, one was brought in who owed him a huge amount. As he had no way of paying it, 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 official prostrated himself in homage and said, 'My lord, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with pity, the master let the official go and wrote off the debt. But when that same official went out he met a fellow servant who owed him a mere fraction of what he himself owed. He seized him and throttled him. 'Pay back what you owe,' he demanded. His fellow servant dropped to his knees and began to plead with him, 'Just give me time and I will pay you back in full.' But he would hear none of it. Instead, he had him put in jail until he paid back what he owed. When his fellow servants saw what had happened they were badly shaken, and went to their master to report the whole incident. His master sent for him and said, 'You worthless wretch! I canceled your entire debt when you pleaded with me. Should you not have dealt mercifully with your fellow servant, as I dealt with you?' Then in anger the master handed him over to the torturers until he paid back all that he owed. My heavenly Father will treat you in exactly the same way unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

The gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION

Sr. Melanie Svoboda, in her book **Traits of Healthy Spirituality**, tells of counseling a woman who was abused by her parents when she was a girl. For years, the woman hung on to her hatred of her parents who had both been deceased for some time. Eventually she stopped praying all together. When her counselor asked her why she could not bring herself to talk to God, the woman said, "I'm afraid that if I pray, God will somehow convince me to forgive my parents, and I can't do that – not yet."

You have to admire the woman's integrity – and her deep understanding of prayer. Being a Christian is easy on holidays, at the marking of family milestones, when we seek solace and comfort in difficult times. But following Jesus is anything but easy when our profession of faith demands that we put aside the safe and comfortable and take on the unpleasant and difficult. Every moment we live, every decision and choice we make, every good thing we do is our sincerest and most revealing response to the question Jesus asks in today's Gospel not only of Peter and the Twelve but of all of us who profess to be his followers: *Who do you say I am?* Our love for family and friends, our commitment to the highest moral and ethical standards, our

willingness to take the first step toward reconciliation and forgiveness are our confession of faith in Jesus as the Love and Word of God incarnate.