

## Singing Our Faith 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time – September 17, 2017

If you thought last Sunday's scriptures were a tough pill to swallow, now is the time to grab another glass of water for this Sunday. The gospel contains the familiar phrase "forgive not seven times, but seventy-seven times." But it's the first reading from the Book of Sirach that really drives home the message of forgiveness. This would be a great passage to read every time we go to confession. It targets anger that we hold deep within our hearts – the anger that causes us to sin and dwell in anguish.

The opening hymn, "Forgive Our Sins" (below), guides our hearts and minds to the scriptures. This text beautifully opens the liturgy by proclaiming that God's grace alone empowers our discipleship (stanza 1). While the title and first stanza most directly draw from the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), the second half of stanza three references Sunday's gospel - "How small are others' debts to us, how great our debt to you!"

I find these verses to be among the most poignant in the reading from Sirach - **"Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the LORD? Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?"** Now cross-reference these with stanza four of the hymn. **"Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls And bid resentment cease. Then, by your mercy reconciled, Our lives will spread your peace."** Both the scripture and the hymn are telling us to do some soul-searching – clear out the cobwebs, let go

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of old grudges, **be happy! Be happy for the benefit of others!** It's calling us to union with God – first through the sacrament of penance, and then to receive abundant grace in the Eucharist. Only through cleansing and reconciliation will we be able to spread God's peace with others. These words put our priorities in order.

Somewhere along the line, I decided that holding on to anger was a waste of my time. My wife will attest that I'm on the ball when it comes to resolving a conflict! That said, I'm not perfect (she'll attest to that, too!), and sometimes I have inner-struggle letting go of conflict and anger. The opening words of Sirach remind me why it's important to let go - **“Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight.”** The ways of the sinner are not God's ways. Yet, as baptized Christians, it's our job to be more like Jesus every day. You see the conflict here.

So go ahead and make your list of whatever anger you're “hugging tight.” Make that list, bring it to church, pray about these conflicts before Mass, and let this hymn and the words of scripture penetrate your heart. Be reconciled to God and to one another.

Stephen Eros

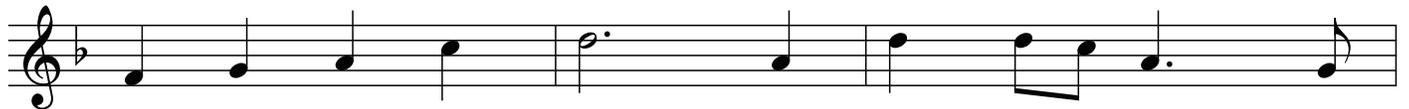
Director of Liturgy & Music

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**Forgive Our Sins**



1. “For - give our sins as we for - give,” You  
2. How can your par - don reach and bless The  
3. In blaz - ing light your cross re - veals The  
4. Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls And



taught us, Lord, to pray; But you a - lone can  
un - for - giv - ing heart That broods on wrongs and  
truth we dim - ly knew: How small are oth - ers'  
bid re - sent - ment cease. Then, by your mer - cy



grant us grace To live the words we say.  
will not let Old bit - ter - ness de - part?  
debts to us, How great our debt to you!  
rec - on - ciled, Our lives will spread your peace.

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