

MARCH 10, 2026 FATHER ERNESTO DE CICCIO

Well, Jesus is being pretty blunt with us today. If we don't forgive, we're not going to be forgiven. You know, every time we pray the Our Father, we say it, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." To receive forgiveness... we have to be able to forgive. And I say to people all the time, forgiveness, mercy, is at the heart of our Christian faith.

We like to sing the old song, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love." That's only partially true because other people, non-Christians, know how to love, as well. The song should say, "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Mercy and Forgiveness," because that's what makes Christians stand out - our willingness to forgive those who have hurt us deeply, just as Jesus was able to forgive those who hurt him, including those who nailed him to the cross.

And Jesus tells this beautiful story about this Lord, this master, who had people who owed him, and I'm not sure how much 10,000 talents was supposed to be, but it sounds like an awful lot of money. We might think, "Well, it doesn't cost anything to forgive." In this case, it cost the master 10,000 talents to forgive his slave, but still, he was willing to do it out of compassion, out of mercy. And that same slave refused to forgive a fellow slave who owed him much, much less.

The whole point of this is that we have received forgiveness from our God. Let's not say, "Well, I don't need to be forgiven for anything because I'm perfect, I'm holy", right? No, we're all humans. We're all weak. We're all broken. And yes, we're all sinful in some ways. But God is always willing to forgive us; all we have to do is ask. That's why Jesus

came down from heaven to sacrifice his life for us and for our salvation. Because we were weighed down by the weight of our sins.

And back in the day, in Jesus' time and before, people had to go to the temple and sacrifice lambs and what have you to receive forgiveness. Jesus sacrifices himself. He pays the price. He doesn't expect us to pay anything. He does it all for us. But there's that one catch, we want to get that forgiveness, then we have to forgive each other.

The beginning of the Gospel actually gives us the whole context. It's Saint Peter asking Jesus, "How often should I forgive? As much as seven times?" Sounds like a lot, eh? Some people will say, "I'll forgive once, maybe twice. On a good day, maybe three times." Seven times was a lot. And Jesus says 77 times. It's not meant to just be a number. It's meant to be infinite mercy. You ever hear that line? Infinite mercy. That's what God has for all of us: infinite mercy. And the other part of it is called unconditional love.

We're journeying through Lent. Lent is a wonderful time to ask for forgiveness, to atone for our sins, to do some penances. But the best thing we can do during Lent is to reflect on who we're holding grudges against, Who we have rancour towards, who are those people that may have hurt us 35 years ago, and we still can't let go, because maybe it still hurts, and even though time is supposed to heal all wounds, those scars remain.

This Lent, let's learn from the example of Jesus, who chose not to get even with people, not to seek vengeance, not to hate, but only to love and to forgive. This Lent, we pray that God will grant us his mercy and love. And God will, if we simply try to practice those same virtues towards all those people who've harmed us in any way. God is mercy. As

people of faith, we strive each day to reflect that mercy to all our brothers and sisters. Let's forgive one another, as Christ has forgiven us.