



This week, in the parable of the two debtors (Mt 18:21-35), our Lord offers a profound teaching on the nature and importance of forgiveness. Not only is it possible for us to forgive every human being who has ever done us wrong, but Jesus teaches us it is not optional. How is this possible? We simply need, by grace, to understand the enormity of the debt we have been forgiven by God in Christ – as a matter of justice we fully deserve eternal damnation. Jesus paid this debt for us by suffering death on our behalf. We in turn, must be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. I would like to share a meditation taken from a popular series, *In Conversation with God*, by Francis Fernandez:

The Sacrament of Penance helps us to be merciful towards others.

The Lord gives Peter a memorable explanation of the nature of Christian pardon in the parable of the two debtors. One debtor owed ten thousand talents while the other owed a hundred denarii. The difference in value is enormous. It took six thousand denarii to make a single talent. The lesson is that God's mercy is immensely greater than our own. True mercy belongs to those humble souls who understand how much they have been forgiven.

Just as the Lord is always ready to forgive us, so we must always be ready to forgive one another. And how great is the need for forgiveness in our world today – indeed in our communities and families, in our very own hearts! That is why the special sacrament of the Church for forgiveness, the Sacrament of Penance, is such a precious gift from the Lord.

In the Sacrament of Penance, God extends his forgiveness to us in a very personal way. Through the ministry of the priest, we come to our loving Savior with the burden of our sins. We confess that we have sinned against God and our neighbor. We manifest our sorrows and ask for pardon from the Lord. Then, through the priest, we hear Christ say to us: 'Your sins are forgiven' (Mark 2:5); 'Go, and do not sin again' (John 8:11). Can we not also hear him say to us as we are filled with his saving grace: 'Extend to others, seventy times seven, this same forgiveness and mercy'? (John Paul II, *Angelus*, 16 September 1984).

Confession is a magnificent school of love and generosity. The sacrament renews the soul and vivifies its capacity for pardon. "The Church must profess and proclaim God's mercy in all its truth, as it has been handed down to us by revelation" (John Paul II, Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, 30 Nov 1980). This task belongs to every Christian. It seems especially urgent in our times.

Let us ask Our Lady for a magnanimous heart like her own. She can help us to avoid brooding over disappointments and injuries. In addition, we must continually grow in our spirit of reparation to the merciful Heart of Jesus.

All I can add is: Amen!!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples

