

We gather to worship God, a God of mercy, a God of healing, a God always willing to forgive. We are called to do the same. We are called to reconcile with our family member, our friend, our neighbor, just as God reconciles with us when we turn away. May the nourishment we receive at the Lord's table strengthen us as we face the challenge of forgiving each other.

As we gather together let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

*Profession of Faith: p. 108*

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow as we say) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

*Introductory Rite:*

*Greeting:*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God forever. **Blessed be God forever.**

*Penitential Rite:*

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, your cross and resurrection signaled a new beginning of peace and reconciliation: Lord have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are comfort to those who seek forgiveness and healing: Christ have mercy

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you give us a new commandment—that we love one another

**Lord, have mercy.**

as you have loved us: Lord have mercy.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

*Opening Prayer:*

Look upon us, O God, Creator and ruler of all things, and, that we may feel the working of your mercy, grant that we may serve you with all our heart.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen**

*Liturgy of the Word:*

*First Reading p. 50*

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Sirach

*Sirach 27:30-28:7*

Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. 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? If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God**

Responsorial Psalm: p. 52

*Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9*

R/. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

**R/. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.**

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. **R/.**

He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion. **R/.**

He will not always chide, nor does he keep his wrath forever. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes. **R/.**

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us. **R/.**

Second Reading p. 52

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

*Romans 14:7-9*

Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

Gospel p. 54

*Matthew 18:21-35*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

**Glory to you, Lord**

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, 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 servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Reflection on the Word:

Anger is a basic human emotion, its welling up within us perfectly natural in many situations. However, if left to fester, or expressed as wrath or vengeance, it can become poisonous. Sirach tells us that “the sinner hugs (wrath and anger) tight,” refusing to let go of their visceral reaction to being wronged (Sirach 27:30). Instead, we must embrace the golden rule, forgiving our neighbor so that we may be forgiven ourselves. Forgiveness opens the door for reconciliation.

When the king in Jesus’ parable forgave the loan, he didn’t just wipe away the servant’s debt, he restored him (and his family) to life. Had he not done so, the servant, his wife, and their children would have been sold, along with all their belongings, to pay his debt. He literally gave them their life back. How tragic to see him then go out and punish the servant with the smaller debt!

In ancient times seven was seen as the perfect number, so it was used to symbolize perfection or completeness, as in the creation story. When Peter suggests to Jesus that forgiving one’s brother or sister “as many as seven times” (Matthew 18:21) would be sufficient, he is suggesting that seven times would amount to total forgiveness. But Jesus responds that “not seven times but seventy-seven times” (18:22) is the answer, implying that there is no completion to forgiveness. Seventy-seven implies boundlessness, a sense that forgiveness is not a task to be quantified and completed, but an attitude to be integrated into our way of living. We are called to be forgiving. Always.

**Question of the Week:** How can I keep a consistent forgiving attitude that assuages my anger? What leads me to forgive one who hurt me?

Prayer of the Faithful:

Trusting in God’s care, we bring our needs and the needs of our neighbor before the Lord.

- For the Church, that we may be a model of forgiveness and mercy in a world that shouts out for vengeance and retribution, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For world leaders, that they may temper justice with mercy as they enact and enforce the laws of their land, let us pray to the Lord.
- For our grandparents, living and deceased, in thanksgiving for all the blessings we have received from them and for the prominent role they have played in many of our lives, let us pray to the Lord.
- For those seeking forgiveness from those they have wronged and for those who believe that they cannot be forgiven, that they may know God’s unconditional and eternal promise of mercy and forgiveness, let us pray to the Lord.
- For catechists and all those who teach the faith to children, catechumens, and learners of all ages, that their ministry may help both student and teacher grow in knowledge and passion for their faith, let us pray to the Lord.
- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

Merciful God, a sinful people turn to you as the ultimate source of justice and mercy. Hear our cries and listen to the prayers we make in the name of your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Communion Rite

*The Lord's Prayer: Page 140*

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

*Rite of Peace:*

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

*Communion:*

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.**

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

*Prayer after Communion:*

May the working of his heavenly gift, O Lord, we pray, take possession of our minds and bodies, so that its effects, and not our own desires, may always prevail in us.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

*Concluding Rite:**Final Blessing:*

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**