

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

KINDNESS: ALWAYS IN SEASON



SUNDAY READINGS:

Sirach 27:30-28:7

Psalms 103:1-4, 9-12

Romans 14:7-9

Matthew 18:21-35

GENEROUSLY RESPONDING TO KINDNESS

Today's Gospel from Matthew narrates the story of a man who was in debt; he sought and received forgiveness for a large amount, but was unwilling to forgive a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount. Hearing this narrative, we ask ourselves:

Am I a truly grateful person, generously responding to others with similar acts of kindness shown to me?

Undoubtedly, all life is gift. God is rich in mercy and kindness, never outdone in generosity. Gratitude, a beautiful virtue, is not a single, one-time expression; Christians approach life, people, and events with a constant "attitude of gratitude." Here are ten simple norms for becoming a truly kind, grateful person, a genuine missionary of mercy.

(1) Recognize your many blessings. Recall the copious gifts you have received: family, health, friends, faith, opportunities. Each moment and stage of life brings new blessings; we are gifted again and again. **(2) Reflect on the source of gifts.** We do not earn gifts; God is the source of our richness. Often gifts arrive in and through other persons, but God, the Father of Mercies, is their ultimate origin. Treasure God's generosity.

(3) Recall frequently: gifts are meant for sharing. All we are and all we have are gifts. Our person, our talents, our richness are meant for sharing, not hiding or hoarding. What you have received as a gift, give as a gift (Mt 10:8). **(4) Remember, remember, remember.** Continuous remembering is central to making our past graced moments, small or large, present and alive in our lives. Like Israel, we must never forget the Lord's deeds (Ps 78:7; 103:2).

(5) Be grateful in all seasons. Gratitude is not only a fair-weather virtue; prosperous times and difficult moments are equally opportunities to give thanks. Whatever you say or do, do all with gratitude (cf. I Cor 10:31). **(6) Guard against the enemies of gratitude.** Self-pity, jealousy, and resentment attack and drive out genuine gratitude. Be done with asking: Why me? Is life fair? Why did she get that opportunity? When will my time come?

(7) Practice acts of gratitude daily. Express and manifest thankfulness regularly; develop the habit of manifesting mercy and gratitude. Each act of appreciation makes the next act easier. "Thank-you" should roll easily off our lips. **(8) Enrich your personality through gratitude.** Grateful people are at peace with themselves, with others, and with what they have. Gratitude produces contentment; it is a sign of a mature and integrated personality.

(9) Place gratitude at the center of your prayer. Prayer from the heart is replete with thankfulness. Grateful persons turn easily to God in prayer, readily forgive neighbor's faults, and appreciate other's goodness. **(10) Become a Eucharistic person.** The Greek word, Eucharist, means thanksgiving: "we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks." Sharing Christ's love in the Eucharist can transform us into loving, grateful, serving persons, permeated with an "attitude of gratitude."

Synthesis. Friends, we never tire of repeating what we say in today's psalm response: "The Lord is kind and merciful." Recognizing the Lord's overflowing kindness should make us truly filled with profound gratitude and concrete acts of kindness.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading: Sirach 27:30-28:7

The Book of Sirach, like all inspired books of scripture, is useful for fruitful Christian living. This book contains the teachings of a famous, holy teacher in Jerusalem. In today's reading we learn what Sirach taught about forgiving the faults of our neighbors. The reading poses several questions; search them and bring them to your meditation.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1-4, 9-12

Today's psalm speaks of God's forgiveness and kindness. We must not forget "all his benefits," his "kindness and compassion," and that "not according to our sins does he deal with us." We never tire of repeating: "The Lord is kind and merciful; slow to anger, and rich in compassion."

Second Reading: Romans 14:7-9

In today's short reading (three verses), Saint Paul expresses profound truths. Indeed, "none of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself." Truly, "if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord." This means that "whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." The fact that we radically belong to the Lord is a great source of consolation.

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

The Gospel of Matthew was put into its final, inspired form probably around the year 85 AD. Matthew was a very good teacher, using stories, parables, and images, which made it easy for his listeners to remember. Who can forget today's message about genuine mercy and forgiveness? In today's translation, the unforgiving man is called a "wicked servant." However, another translation calls him a "worthless, lousy lout." Which translation do you prefer? Why?

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who recently published three short, meditative books: ► **Living in Joyful Hope**, ► **Exploring Vatican II Treasures**, and
► **A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis** (www.faithalivebooks.com).

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