

Sunday, Sep 13, 2026

There are no limits on forgiveness

One of the hardest things to do is to forgive. While God's forgiveness and mercy is constant, you still have to accept it, and that means more than an inner spiritual acceptance: It involves active love of both the lovable and also the people who you don't like or don't like you, even your enemies. That kind of forgiveness needs a special kind of love that makes you willing to sacrifice. What goes around comes around. Show mercy, and God will be merciful to you. Your salvation depends on forgiving "not seven times but seventy-seven times"—that is, without limit.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Sirach 27:30-28:7; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35 (130).
"Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself, can he seek pardon for his own sins?"

Monday, Sep 14, 2026

Where the cross leads

In the critically acclaimed Mexican film *Pan's Labyrinth*, an unhappy girl's mother has married a handsome general who is, by all accounts, a monster. The girl's only hope seems to be in following the directions of an ugly creature, Pan, who will lead her through her labyrinthine fate. At one point Pan goads the young girl, "You still have tasks to complete." She laments, "But they've locked the door and I can't get out." The creature hands her a piece of chalk. "Draw your own door," he suggests. It is not clear where the door will lead, to life or death. For Christians, the only door we have is the cross. Yes, it leads to death, but also to eternal life.

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS
Numbers 21:4b-9; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 (638). *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life."*

Tuesday, Sep 15, 2026

Pain beyond words

Unspeaking grief is the only way to describe what loving parents endure at the death of a son or daughter. It doesn't matter if the child lived 6 minutes or 60 years. Mary, the Mother of God, had to watch her son be tortured and executed. Our Lady of Sorrows is a title Mary earned by her spiritual martyrdom. Like all Christian martyrs, Mary remained faithful and found solace in the life of Christ despite her excruciating pain. Show compassion for the spiritual martyrs in your community, and be filled with Mary's grace as you contemplate her great sorrows.

MEMORIAL OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS
1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27-31a;; John 19:25-27 or Luke 2:33-35 (444/639). *"This child is destined ... to be a sign that will be contradicted and you yourself a sword will pierce."*

Wednesday, Sep 16, 2026

Keep an open-door policy

During the first half of the third century, when Cornelius and Cyprian lived, the church faced the difficult question of how to treat the large numbers of Christians who had abandoned their faith in times of persecution. Some bishops refused to allow them back, but Cornelius and Cyprian argued for their return. Cyprian wrote, "One cannot have God for a father who does not have the church for a mother." Hardship and danger visit us at unexpected times, and we react in ways that are hard to predict. At times, we may run away from a challenge, only to ask ourselves later, "Why wasn't I more courageous in that situation?" It's good to keep the

doors of the church wide open—any one of us might need that open door someday.

MEMORIAL OF CORNELIUS, POPE, AND CYPRIAN, BISHOP, MARTYRS

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Luke 7:31-35 (445). *"So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

Thursday, Sep 17, 2026

Pardon me?

The woman who anointed Jesus' feet with precious oil first washed them with her tears. Why was she crying? Perhaps she saw clearly that her own sins caused her separation from God. The Pharisee who criticized Jesus for associating with the woman, on the other hand, was deluded into self-righteousness. Jesus is able to forgive the woman's sin because she first recognized her need for forgiveness; self-righteousness, though, is unforgivable because it suffers the delusion that it does not need to be forgiven. Saint Augustine explains: "How many there are who know that they have sinned against their brothers or sisters and yet are unwilling to say: 'Forgive me.' They were not ashamed to sin, but they are ashamed to ask pardon. They were not ashamed of their evil act, but they blush where humility is concerned." Don't let your pride get in the way of the joy of forgiveness.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 7:36-50 (446). *"Her many sins have been forgiven."*

Friday, Sep 18, 2026

Time to name names

When you consider how many people Jesus healed and talked with and ate with and traveled with during his short life, you realize the vast majority of them are anonymous. They are simply known as the "poor" or the "sick" or some other group. When we don't know a person's name it is easier to think of them as a category instead of a human person with a history and a future. Today is a good day to notice the people we regularly encounter whose names we do not know: the homeless person on the street corner, the server behind the counter at the coffee shop, the senior who sits in the first pew in church. Then maybe ask their names.

1 Corinthians 15:12-20; Luke 8:1-3 (447). *"Jesus journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God."*

Saturday, Sep 19, 2026

The ears have it

Jesus sometimes said things in the gospels that are puzzling, or at least perplexing on the surface. For example, when he took the disciples aside to explain to them the parable of the sower, he told them, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that they may look but not see, and hear but not understand." Why didn't he want the others to understand? Wasn't that the whole point of his mission? Perhaps Jesus was letting us know of the challenges we will face as we try to spread the light of the gospel to others. Regardless, strive to be one whose ears hear all the Lord has to say.

1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42-49; Luke 8:4-15 (448). *"Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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