

24th Sunday -A: Stop Carrying Rotten Potatoes: Sir 27:30–28:7; Rom 14:7–9; Mat 18:21–35

Two little brothers, Harry and James, had finished supper and were playing until bedtime. Somehow, Harry hit James with a stick, and tears and bitter words followed. Charges and accusations were still being exchanged as their mother prepared them for bed. She said, *“Now boys, what would happen if either of you died tonight and you never had the opportunity again for forgiving one another?”* James replied, *“OK, I’ll forgive him tonight, but if we’re both alive in the morning, he’d better look out.”*

“Forgiveness is putting down the burden before it poisons your heart.” This reminds me of a story. A teacher told the students, “I want each of you to bring a bag of potatoes tomorrow.” The next day, every student came with a bag of potatoes. Then the teacher said, “For every person you refuse to forgive, write their name on one potato.” Some students wrote three names. Some wrote ten. One boy filled almost the entire bag. Then she said, “Carry this bag everywhere for one week.” The first day was easy. The second day, their shoulders began to hurt. The third day, the potatoes began to smell. By the end of the week, everyone begged, “Please, let us throw them away!” The teacher smiled and said, “Exactly, Unforgiveness is like carrying rotten potatoes in your heart. The person you hate may not even notice, but **you carry the weight. You carry the smell. You suffer.**” Forgiveness does not change the past. **It changes the person carrying the burden.** Jesus says to Peter, “Forgive, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Jesus is indirectly saying: **Stop carrying rotten potatoes.**

In the first reading, we are reminded that anger and revenge are like rotten potatoes we choose to carry. The longer we hold on to them, the more they poison our hearts. Sirach reminds us that if we want God to forgive us, we must first learn to forgive others. We cannot ask God for mercy while refusing to show mercy to someone else.

In the second reading, St. Paul tells us that **we belong to Christ**. Since Jesus forgave us by giving His life on the cross, a Christian who keeps carrying hatred is carrying a burden that Christ has already asked him to put down. Our lives belong to the Lord. Therefore, we are called to live with the heart of Christ—a heart of mercy and forgiveness.

In the Gospel, Peter asks Jesus, “How many times should I forgive?” Jesus replies, **“Not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”** This means, **forgiveness should have no limits.** Through the parable of the unforgiving servant, Jesus teaches us that those who have received God’s great mercy should never keep

carrying the rotten potatoes of resentment, but should freely forgive others as God has forgiven them.

What is our key takeaway from today's Sunday? First: Let go of the burden before it becomes your identity. Every grudge is like another rotten potato in your bag. At first, it seems manageable. But over time, it becomes heavy, exhausting, and even begins to smell in the way we speak, think, and treat others. The person who hurt you may have moved on, but **you are still carrying the burden.** Jesus invites us today to **put the bag down.** Ask yourself: **"Whose name is still written on the potatoes in my heart?"**

Second: Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling. Many people say, "Father, I don't feel like forgiving." Remember, Jesus never said, **"Forgive when you feel like it."** He simply said, **"Forgive."** When we forgive, we free ourselves more than the other person. It is said: **"Forgiveness doesn't always change the offender, but it always changes the forgiver."** Forgiveness may not erase what happened, but it prevents what happened from continuing to control our hearts.

Third: Forgive because you have already been forgiven. The unforgiving servant in today's Gospel forgot one important truth: **he had been forgiven an enormous debt.** Every day, God forgives us far more than we can ever repay. If God has shown such boundless mercy, how can we refuse mercy to those around us? Remember: **We cannot ask God to empty His bag of mercy for us while we continue carrying our own bag of rotten potatoes.** The more we remember God's mercy, the easier it becomes to show mercy to others.

So, my dear friends, let us ask ourselves today: **"Do I still carry the heavy bag of rotten potatoes?"** Maybe there is someone whose name is still written on one of those potatoes. Maybe there is an old hurt. Maybe there is anger. Maybe there is resentment. Today, Jesus comes to us and gently says: **"You don't have to carry that bag anymore."** **Leave it at the foot of the Cross.** Put down the burden. Let go of the anger. Choose forgiveness. Because forgiveness is not carrying the past—it is **putting down the burden before it poisons your heart.** **Am I ready to put the bag down?** Jesus says **"Love one another as I have loved you and Forgive one another as I have forgiven you."** Amen