

# 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 23 FEBRUARY 2025



## COLLECT

Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that, always pondering spiritual things,  
we may carry out in both word and deed  
that which is pleasing to you.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

'Pay back' is an ambiguous term. Sometimes it means to take revenge, to retaliate, to avenge, to exact vengeance, to fight back or get even. But it can also mean to make restitution, to reimburse, to repay or refund, to compensate, to make amends or to indemnify. The first is nasty and destructive; the second can be respectful and loving.

In today's gospel, Jesus takes payback to a whole new level. He advocates paying back hatred with love, violence with peace, robbery with gift-giving. Jesus' teaching often turns human wisdom on its head. It presents an unbelievable challenge which is exactly what it means when the reign of God breaks into our broken world. We do not just stop the cycle of evil. We reverse it and transform it into a spiral of good. Sometimes we speak of 'paying it forward'. As we have been helped, so we help others – *Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.*

## A reading from the first book of Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23

Saul set off and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, accompanied by three thousand men chosen from Israel to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph.

So in the dark David and Abishai made their way towards the force, where they found Saul asleep inside the camp, his spear stuck in the ground beside his head, with Abner and the troops lying round him.

Then Abishai said to David, 'Today God has put your enemy in your power; so now let me pin him to the ground with his own spear. Just one stroke! I will not need to strike him twice.' David answered Abishai, 'Do not kill him, for who can lift his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?' David took the spear and the pitcher of water from beside Saul's head, and they made off. No one saw, no one knew, no one woke up; they were all asleep, for a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen on them.

David crossed to the other side and halted on the top of the mountain a long way off; there was a wide space between them. David then called out, 'Here is the king's spear. Let one of the soldiers come across and take it. The Lord repays everyone for his uprightness and loyalty. Today the Lord put you in my power, but I would not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed.'

## Responsorial Psalm Ps 102:1–4, 8, 10, 12–13

**R.** The Lord is kind and merciful.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,  
all my being, bless his holy name.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord  
and never forget all his blessings. **R.**

It is he who forgives all your guilt,  
who heals every one of your ills,  
who redeems your life from the grave,  
who crowns you with love and compassion. **R.**

The Lord is compassion and love,  
slow to anger and rich in mercy.  
He does not treat us according to our sins  
nor repays us according to our faults. **R.**

As far as the east is from the west  
so far does he remove our sins.  
As a father has compassion on his sons,  
the Lord has pity on those who fear him. **R.**

## First Reading

The first two kings of Israel were Saul and David. The king was God's anointed and ruled over God's people. However, both Saul and David are presented as flawed human beings, though this reading shows David in a favourable light.

Saul grows increasingly erratic with the passing years and becomes jealous of the younger and more successful David. In this passage, as he is being pursued by Saul, David has the opportunity to assassinate his rival and seize power, but he chooses not to repay injustice with vengeance. The final sentence which explains this choice portrays David as a forerunner of Christ.

The broken verses of chapter 26 indicate that this is a shortened version of the story. It is worth reading the whole to get a fuller sense of what is happening. Still, the story as we have it is clear and dramatic. The reader should make good use of the drama of the direct speech and the tensions of the narrative. David and Abishai sneak into the camp in the dark: *no one saw, no one knew, no one woke up...*

Check the pronunciation of Abishai and Abner in the guide at the end of the book.

## Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 102/103 looks forward to the text of the gospel: it also calls the Lord 'compassionate', slow to anger and rich in mercy. In fact, the word *compassion* occurs three times in four verses. For this divine blessing, the psalmist gives heartfelt thanks and praise. The response is a simple statement but should be sung with gratitude and awe.

The third and fourth stanzas pick up the words of God's self-revelation to Moses as he receives the tablets of the law (Ex 34:6-7). This authoritative declaration of God's kindness and mercy captures the essence of the entire covenant with Israel. It is the oft-repeated heart of Israel's faith.

Clearly the reader/cantor needs to express their joy with a warm proclamation of this psalm.

## **A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians** 15:45– 49

The first man, Adam, as scripture says, became a living soul; but the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. That is, first the one with the soul, not the spirit, and after that, the one with the spirit. The first man, being from the earth, is earthly by nature; the second man is from heaven. As this earthly man was, so are we on earth; and as the heavenly man is, so are we in heaven. And we, who have been modelled on the earthly man, will be modelled on the heavenly man.

## **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke** 6:27–38

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

## **Second Reading**

For once, we really need this reading to be longer. Verses 40-44 make sense of this text: *There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies... it is the same with the resurrection of the dead: what is sown is corruptible, but what is raised is incorruptible; it is sown in contempt but raised in glory; it is sown in weakness but raised in power; it is sown a physical body and it is raised a spiritual body...* Then follows the parallel between the first Adam and Christ (the second Adam), between the one fashioned from earth and the one come down from heaven.

In brief, Paul is saying that we who are fashioned in the image of the earthly Adam will be refashioned in the image of the heavenly one; by our resurrection, we shall be like the risen Christ in glory.

The reading is short but difficult to follow. The reader will need to make the best of the parallels and contrasts: earth-heaven, physical-spiritual, first-last, soul-spirit. The tone is probably best to be analytical and explanatory in order to let the reader into Paul's reasoning.

## **Gospel**

The words are well-known, but they should be read in such a way as to preserve their original shock value. The instructions are extreme and certainly counter-cultural. The harsh challenge of the opening lines are softened a little when it comes to, *Treat others as you would like them to treat you.*

But it is then that we are asked to go the extra mile. It's easy to love those who love us! Christ asks us to do more. If we reflect on the intractable examples of war in the world today, we realise at once that the cycle can only be broken through drastic action. A 'proportionate response' to violence will not achieve true peace.

The reading concludes with an extraordinary image of the abundance of God's grace and compassion: *a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over.* This assurance calls for a warm and generous proclamation to contrast with the more determined tone of earlier challenges.

## CONCLUDING PRAYER

May God bless us with every heavenly blessing,  
make us always holy and pure in his sight,  
pour out in abundance upon us the riches of his glory,  
and teach us with the words of truth;  
may he instruct us in the Gospel of salvation,  
and ever endow us with fraternal charity.  
Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time VI, Roman Missal p. 717)

*An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.*

## SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

### FIRST READING ( NRSV)

**A reading from the first book of Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23**

Having heard that David was hiding out in the desert,  
Saul rose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph,  
with three thousand chosen men of Israel,  
to seek David in the Wilderness of Ziph.

David and Abishai went into Saul's army by night;  
there Saul lay sleeping within the encampment,  
with his spear stuck in the ground at his head;  
and Abner and the army lay around him.

Abishai said to David,  
"God has given your enemy into your hand today;  
now therefore let me pin him to the ground  
with one stroke of the spear;  
I will not strike him twice."

But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him;  
for who can raise his hand against the Lord's anointed,  
and be guiltless?"

So David took the spear that was at Saul's head and the water jar,  
and they went away.

No one saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake;  
for they were all asleep,  
because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

Then David went over to the other side,  
and stood on top of a hill far away,  
with a great distance between them.

David called aloud to Saul,  
"Here is the spear, O king!

Let one of the young men come over and get it.  
The Lord rewards everyone for his righteousness  
and his faithfulness;  
for the Lord gave you into my hand today,  
but I would not raise my hand against the Lord's anointed.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM ( NRSV)

Psalm 103.1-2, 3-4, 8+10, 12-13 (R.8)

**R.** The Lord is kind and merciful.

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless his holy name.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits. **R.**

It is the Lord who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. **R.**

The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities. **R.**

As far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes our transgressions from us.  
As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. **R.**

## SECOND READING ( NRSV)

**A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians 15:45–49**

It is written:

"The first man, Adam, became a living being";  
the last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

But it is not the spiritual that is first,  
but the physical, and then the spiritual.

The first was from the earth, made of dust;  
the second is from heaven.

As was the one of dust, so are those who are of the dust;  
and as is the one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust,  
we will also bear the image of the one of heaven

## GOSPEL ( NRSV)

**A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 6:27–38**

Jesus addressed a great crowd of his disciples,  
together with the multitude from Judea, Jerusalem,  
Tyre and Sidon.

"I say to you that listen:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you,  
pray for those who abuse you.

If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also;  
and from anyone who takes away your coat  
do not withhold even your shirt.

Give to everyone who begs from you;  
and if anyone takes away your goods,  
do not ask for them again.

Do to others as you would have them do to you."

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?

For even sinners love those who love them.

If you do good to those who do good to you,  
what credit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same.

If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive,  
what credit is that to you?

Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

But love your enemies,

do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.

Your reward will be great, and you will be  
children of the Most High;

for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged;

do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven;

give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over;  
will be put into your lap;

for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."