

The Church of Saint Boniface
September 13, 2020
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time



“Pay back what you owe.”

(Matthew 18:28)

FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR

“I forgive you” (– a liberating experience)

How many credit cards do you have? When does your credit card tempt you the most?

Wrath, anger or vengeance are like credit cards, they tempt us many times; their results can be immediate and swiftly effective, yet they have **another side to them: they have deep damaging ‘hidden fees’ that leave us, our relationships with others and our relationship with God, ruined.** The readings we listen to this weekend offer us an alternative or another way and that is, the believer/Christian must learn to forgive, to give mercy, to be compassionate. **This is what Christ’s lifestyle is and what a liberating experience it can be.**

The First reading is from the Book of Sirach, written by a retired Jewish Elder statesman. This sage builds an academy in Jerusalem to impart and train young people on the conduct of life, values and right behavior, how to make the right relationships, how to be upright. **His faith is ever present. The early believing societies believed in the ‘present life.’ The ‘present’ is not a dress rehearsal—this is it!** So how you lived mattered. Divine judgment/punishment or reward is totally based on how you have lived your life. **The way to deal with wrath and anger or vengeance was only one: ‘forgive’ and forgive now! Forgive your neighbor’s injustice. One who does not forgive will, in turn, not be forgiven by God.** The writer applies an old Babylonian law –the law of Talion: **‘eye for an eye.’ Criminals should be punished precisely for the same injustices and damages they inflict upon their victims, so God forgives those who forgive the same way and measure.**

*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?
Remember your last days, set enmity aside. (Sir 28, 3-4, 6)*

The young (we) must remember that to believe in Yahweh is to forgive. Pardoning others is a condition for divine forgiveness. Refuse mercy, you will not be given mercy. What toll has anger or wrath taken on you or your relationship with others? Do you hold on to anger or a grudge? Why does mercy and compassion not attract us?

Every time I listen to the parable of the unmerciful servant, I conclude by saying he rightly deserves his punishment. How can one who has just been given a great pardon from a heavy debt not be moved by this act of generosity? He goes and does the opposite to a fellow servant who owes him a much smaller amount?? This is wrong! Yet how often it does happen in our day to day living. The forgiveness the unmerciful servant received was not a liberating experience. He did not learn anything from it so to cancel the smaller debt of his brother.

In today’s gospel to receive mercy is to give mercy, to be forgiven by God means to forgive each other. To refuse to forgive is to imprison/choke oneself in the hell of isolation (ego or self). It means to cut off from the community of repeated forgiveness. The only way to tear down this wall is to be a person of boundless (limitless) forgiveness. As Jesus says: to forgive seven times seventy seven times (meaning indefinite) .it is this that will set us free.

We must learn to forgive, to embrace this liberating path and lifestyle of Jesus. It deflates us from our hurts (the hell created in us). It nurtures more dialogue among people and talking to others. Pardoning others heals ruptured communities best and leads to a path of transformation even for those who have fallen from grace in our eyes. Let us never be tempted to be hard of heart.

“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” these are the liberating words of Jesus that open the door to our salvation. Let us live the same way, never hesitate to be moved with compassion and mercy over all things, **this is God’s way.**

A Blessed Week in the Lord!

— Father Anthony



Saturday, Sept. 26 at 8 PM

Featuring

“Hidden Figures” (rated PG)

The story of a team of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program.

Don’t forget to bring snacks!

MASS INTENTIONS

Sept. 13	10:30 AM	Robert Bourgeois , by his wife
Sept. 17	8:00 AM	Leon Tarbell , by Maureen Wasel
Sept. 27	8:00 AM	Fred & Irene Raboin , by Marc & Regina Raboin
Oct. 4	8:00 AM	James & Regina Fisher , by Marc & Regina Raboin

REGULAR MASS SCHEDULE BEGINS SEPT. 12/13

Saturday 4:00 p.m. | Sunday 8:00 a.m. , 10:30 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. (new!)
8:00 Morning Mass Wednesday, Thursday and Friday



- Are you an adult 18 years and above and have not received the Sacraments?
- Are you an adult interested in getting Baptized?
- Are you a non-catholic Christian who would like to become a Catholic?

RCIA begins October 2020. Call and register at the Parish office or contact Lucy Marcil.



Our parish food drive for the month of September will benefit Saint Francis of Assisi Food Pantry in Fitchburg.

Non-perishable items most needed:

- Canned Meats • Canned Tuna Fish • Soups
- Cereal • Pasta • Pasta Sauce

Please leave donations below the statue of Mary near the altar before Masses, or during parish office hours on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CONTACT-FREE OUTDOOR DROP OFF TABLE 11:00–12:00 on Saturday, Sept. 19th and 26th for those who may not wish to enter the church. Thanks to the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus for their help.

COLLECTION REPORT

Week of September 6	
– Sunday Offering	\$1,958
– Fuel/Maintenance	644
– Other	70
Total	\$2,672

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org



GRAND RAFFLE TICKETS

Please return sold tickets with stubs and donations in the offertory basket at the church entrance or to the parish office. If you would like additional tickets, please call or email the parish office.

GIFT BASKET RAFFLE

Yes, we will also have our famous gift basket raffle this year. Watch for more info!

Yard Sale/Raffles for Charity

Saturday, Sept. 19, 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

To support the Battered Women's Shelter

\$5 table rental (bring your own)

16 Clearview Ave., Fitchburg

Call/text Cheryl @ 978-855-1712

or email Cucch54@yahoo.com

PRAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST
EVERYTHING IN RECENT HURRICANES
AND WILDFIRES.

The Bishops' Emergency Disaster Fund is

asking Catholics around the country to help with relief efforts. Visit worcesterdiocese.org for more information.

Forgiveness in Community

This gospel is a troubling tale. Jesus tells a parable of a king settling accounts with a debtor who begs for patience. Out of pity, the king writes off the debt. But when that same official throttles a servant who pleads for similar patience, the king, hearing of the incident, renounces the one he had forgiven and has him **tortured “until he paid” (however that might be done).** “My Father,” Jesus concludes, “will treat you the same way.”

What happened to “seventy times seven times”? The king’s sentencing of the first debtor to torture doesn’t seem so very forgiving—especially after only one failing.

The key is that the failing is radical unforgiveness. **It’s as if the refusal to forgive, by its very nature,** locks us into a torturous circle. So tightly closed against pardoning the other, we have sealed ourselves off from the very experience of pardon.

It is hard to believe that God could forgive endlessly. We, for our part, surely would not. Forgive again and again and again? We think that if we forgive too easily, people will walk all over us—our children, our spouses, our friends, our enemies. We **offer ourselves more “realistic” counsel. “I’ll forgive,** maybe once, or if they forgive me first, or if there is **some promise of change, or if they don’t do it again, or if they acknowledge their sin.”**

But such a tactic leads to a tortured soul. The weight of unforgiven hurt bends and burdens us. We carry grudges like clinkers, burnt up and cold.

In the church, in our families, in our hearts, we have all experienced the logic of unforgiveness. Even at the age of five, a child might be heard to **mutter, “I’ll never talk to them again.” If the judgment hardens, it is only the heart of the judger that grows cold. The words, “I will never forgive you,” can shut tight the heart of the one who utters them, definitively deadened and alone.**

There is an unyielding recalcitrance about unforgiveness. It is a rejection of love. We refuse to give it; we make it impossible to receive it.

When the Lord answers Peter’s question, how often we should forgive, he says, “not seven times but seventy times seven times.” Jesus is not recommending a mathematics of reconciliation. He is using the extreme numbers to suggest the unbridgeable chasm between a forgiving and an unforgiving universe. His parable may be less about the retribution of God than it is about a state of soul so hardened that even a kind and compassionate God could not soften it.

— Gerald Darring

Saints of the Week

September 14.

EXALTATION of the HOLY CROSS
Saint Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, is credited with having found the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The cross quickly became an object of veneration.



September 15.

OUR LADY of SORROWS
The principal biblical references to Mary’s sorrows are Simeon’s prediction about a sword piercing Mary’s soul, and Jesus’ words from the cross to Mary. The two passages are brought together as prediction and fulfillment.



September 16.

SAINT CORNELIUS
Cornelius was elected pope after a 14 month vacancy in the papacy. Cornelius served as Pope for only two years, but they were years packed with important happenings in the life of the Church.



September 17.

SAINT ROBERT BELLARMI
Saint Robert Bellarmine was ordained in 1570 during a period when the study of theology was in a weakened state. He dedicated his time and energy to the study of Church history, the Fathers of the Church, and to Scripture, to organize Church teaching and to face the attacks of the Protestant Reformers.
Saint Robert Bellarmine is the Patron Saint of catechists.



September 18.

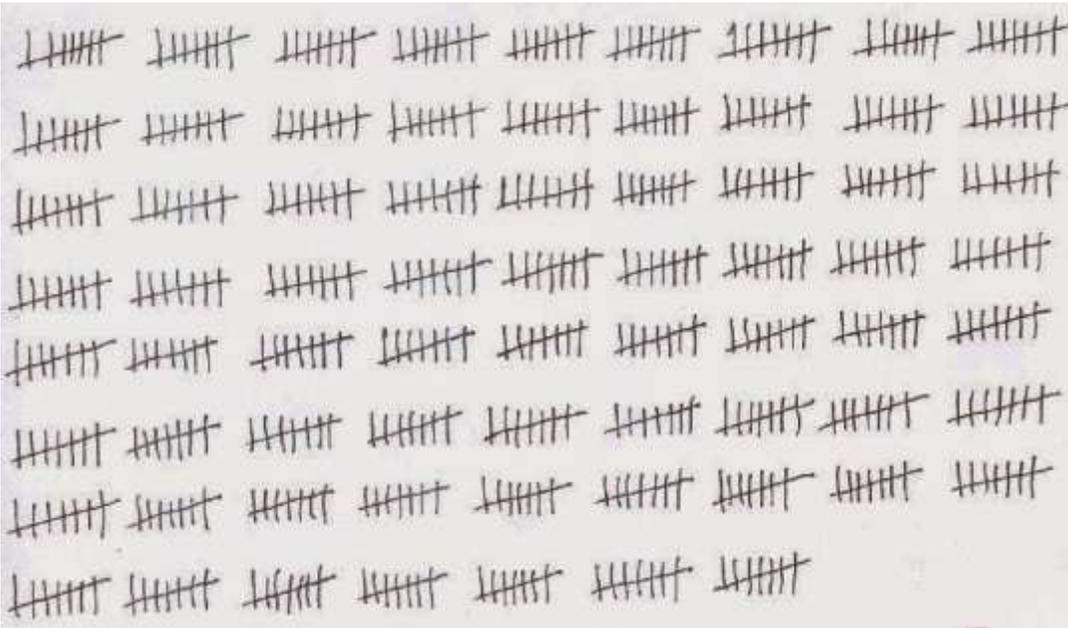
SAINT JOSEPH of CUPERTINO
Joseph is most famous for levitating at prayer. Already as a child, Joseph showed a fondness for prayer. After a short career with the Capuchins, he joined the Conventual Franciscans. Following a brief assignment caring for the friary mule, Joseph began his studies for the priesthood. His tendency to levitate during prayer was often times a cross.
Saint Joseph is the Patron Saint of pilots, air travelers and astronauts.



September 19.

SAINT JANUARIUS
Little is known about the life of Januarius. Legend has it that he and his companions were thrown to the bears in the amphitheater of Pozzuoli, but the animals failed to attack them. They were then beheaded, and Januarius’ blood ultimately brought to Naples.
Saint Januarius is the patron saint of Naples.





70
x 7

The Accounting of Forgiveness

Peter knew well what his master taught about forgiveness. It was especially clear in the model prayer Jesus had taught the disciples: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” That was clear enough; yet Peter’s question was a very human one: “How far do I have to go in this forgiveness thing?” As an outside limit, he suggests the round number seven. Jesus (teasingly?) responds with the fuller round number seventy times seven—or 490, to be exact. And of course the point was that, like the lawyer who asked Jesus to define “neighbor,” Peter is wrong to inquire into the limits of the command to forgive.

The king overlooks the absurdity, allows himself to be moved by compassion, and forgives the man outright.

Seeing that Peter wants to quantify forgiveness, Jesus tells a parable about forgiveness using numbers whose proportions are absurd. (“You want to talk numbers? I’ll give you some numbers to think about.”) Jesus tells of a king calling his debtors to account and dealing with one who owes him ten thousand talents. Now, a single talent was a huge amount of silver, worth, our lexicons tell us, around 10,000 denarii (and a denarius was worth a day’s labor). Thus, 10,000 talents would come to a hundred million denarii. If you like, you can estimate what a day’s worth of labor is worth today in dollars and then multiply that by 100,000,000. But just trying to think of an amount worth the salary of 100,000,000 days’ labor should be enough to help us realize that the NAB’s paraphrase for “ten thousand talents”—“a huge amount”—while correct, is really an understatement.

When the king orders the debtor, along with his family and property, to be sold to recover a little of the debt, our debtor begs for mercy and make the absurd promise that he will pay the debt “in full.” The king overlooks the absurdity, allows himself to be moved by compassion, and forgives the man outright.

Still in the flush of what we must imagine would be a feeling of unexpected good fortune and gratitude, this liberated debtor runs into a coworker who owes him a mere hundred denarii (which comes to one millionth of what he had just been forgiven—in case Peter is still trying to imagine 490 instances of forgiveness). And the man has the gall to demand immediate payment. When the coworker pleads with our forgiven debtor in the very words he had just used before the king, the man has him committed to the debtors’ prison. Knowing of the first man’s recent benefit, the other servants are rightly enraged, as is the king, when he finds out.

Jesus’ (satiric) numbers game answering Peter’s (misguidedly serious) numbers game is there for us to contemplate, if we dare to measure how much the Lord would have us forgive one another.

— Dennis Hamm, SJ

From the Heart

Last week we reflected on sin as an interpersonal offense, something that divides members of the Christian community. When the sinner refuses to admit the sin, he or she is thrown out of the community. When **the sinner admits the sin, the community's** forgiveness reinstates him or her to membership. Reconciliation presumes and is based upon forgiveness from the heart.

Today's reading proposes two ideas. Central to each is how "members of the church" (see the NRSV translation) are to behave toward each other. **The first idea in Jesus' reply to Peter's question is that disciples of Jesus must forgive one another always ("seventy times seven"), without limit. The second idea, found in the parable, is the communal dimension of forgiveness.**

Let us take a closer look at the parable (Matt 18:23-35).

Debts

First-century Mediterranean peasants understood sin, that is, interpersonal transgressions, after the fashion of debts. That is what Jesus taught his followers to ask of **God: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt 6:12). For Westerners accustomed to a money-driven economy, debts almost always translate into "money owed."**

Since economics is our culture's predominant institution, everything is viewed from an economic perspective. In drug arrests we hear not of people saved from potential addiction, but rather the dollar value of the drugs confiscated. In natural disasters we hear not so much of **people's misfortunes but rather the economic loss in terms of dollars.**

The moral of Jesus' story is that members of the community must treat one another as God has treated each of them.

Not so our peasant ancestors, for theirs was not a money-based economy. Their lives were based on interpersonal **relationships even in what we would recognize as "economic"** transactions. In such a culture, the purpose of haggling is not economic but interpersonal. That the potential buyer will make a purchase is a foregone conclusion. The buyer haggles and the seller willingly goes along because both are building



an interpersonal relationship called friendship (see Genesis 18:22-33; James 2:23). Friends will be faithful: the seller will always sell and the buyer will always get a good price.

The Parable

But the king is sensitive to his honorable reputation. If he deals harshly with a servant of his own household, his subjects will judge him to be shameless, a man without honor. **So the king decides to act in "mercy" and forgive the debt.** He gains more honor by this decision than he would by insisting on receiving full payment of the debt.

In behavior that is both shocking and sad, the forgiven slave turns toward a fellow slave in the same household and refuses to forgive a much smaller debt. He refuses to imitate the merciful behavior of the king-patron. If he gets away with this strategy the king will become a laughing stock. To protect his honor, the king-patron has no choice but to put this brazen slave in his proper place: jail!

The moral of Jesus' story is that members of the community must treat one another as God has treated each of them. They must choose the more honorable path and forgive one another "from the heart." Jesus' instruction echoes Leviticus 19:17: "You shall not hate your brother in your heart ... you shall love your neighbor [understood here as a fellow-Israelite, a member of your in-group] as yourself."

How well do Americans fare in forgiving or loving each other from the heart?

— John J. Pilch

Saint Boniface Church

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Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

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Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)

The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM
(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* Members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

	<i>phone</i>	<i>email</i>
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Louise Nadeau, Sacristan		
Ministry Schedule	978-582-4008	stbonifaceparish@verizon.net
Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK	978-582-7110	

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

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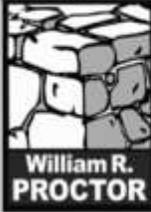
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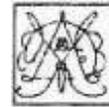
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