

## The Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time February 20, 2022

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

#### **First Reading: 1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23**

In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with three thousand picked men of Israel, to search for David in the desert of Ziph.

So David and Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night and found Saul lying asleep within the barricade, with his spear thrust into the ground at his head and Abner and his men sleeping around him.

Abishai whispered to David:

"God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day. Let me nail him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I will not need a second thrust!" But David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the LORD's anointed and remain unpunished?" So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head, and they got away without anyone's seeing or knowing or awakening. All remained asleep, because the LORD had put them into a deep slumber.

Going across to an opposite slope, David stood on a remote hilltop at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and the troops. He said: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness. Today, though the LORD delivered you into my grasp, I would not harm the LORD's anointed."

#### **Responsorial Psalm: Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13**

**R (8a) The Lord is kind and merciful.**

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

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

He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion.

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

Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes.

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

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us.

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

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

#### **Second Reading: 1 Cor 15:45-49**

Brothers and sisters:

It is written, The first man, Adam, became a living being,

the last Adam a life-giving spirit.

But the spiritual was not first;

rather the natural and then the spiritual.

The first man was from the earth, earthly;

the second man, from heaven.

As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly,

and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly.

Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

#### **Alleluia Jn 13:34**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

I give you a new commandment, says the Lord: love one another as I have loved you.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

#### **Gospel: Lk 6:27-38**

Jesus said to his disciples:

"To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

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#### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

#### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

In this world of chaos, where murder and mayhem against the innocent is becoming increasingly commonplace, I suppose that we should not be surprised that revenge and retribution in many forms are also becoming increasingly commonplace. Occasionally though, a ray of light penetrates the darkness and chaos of our world and shines forth as a beacon of light, though seemingly unnatural and unexplainable to many.

This awe-inspiring ray of light is seen when a father visits the formerly deranged, now imprisoned, murderer of his middle son who was killed while working; or when a mother arranges a three-hour encounter with the murderer of her young daughter, who finally after 15 years of imprisonment admits to the crime; or when parents confront the drunken driver who was responsible for taking the lives of their son and daughter-in-law, leaving their grandchild parentless. The ray of light which astonishes us is that these visits and confrontations were not to berate and blame the ones responsible for the chaos but to say, "I forgive you," and to tell them how they too can know Christ's forgiveness and experience a changed life.

What would cause the pain, anger and loss these parents experienced, to evolve not into revenge and retribution, but into mercy and forgiveness?

Mercy, not giving people what they deserve, is what this week's Scripture readings are all about. In the First Reading we see Saul, in a fit of pride take the love and loyalty given by David and return it in jealousy and with the threat of death. David was pursued and dispossessed of his home and loved ones. Humanly speaking he could have sought revenge and retribution and killed Saul when he discovered him defenseless. This "justified" act would have freed him from a life of persecution by Saul. Fortunately for Saul, David's attitude and actions were ruled not by his passions, or even by what would be accepted as normal reactions, but by consciousness of God and by God's definition of righteousness. So Saul was mercifully spared.

The people mentioned above, who found it in their hearts to forgive those guilty of taking their loved ones from them, who humanly speaking they should despise, have a similar consciousness of God and God's love and mercy. Having themselves experienced God's mercy they became merciful. They were propelled forward on these missions of mercy because they knew and appreciated God's mercy.

When getting to know these Christians who found it in their hearts to forgive the killers of their children, we discover that this propensity toward mercy was not something that miraculously appeared overnight. Rather it was the natural, or should we say supernatural, culmination of a life-time of mercy, where forgiveness and grace were regularly extended on a daily basis to people who perpetrated little and big offenses against them. Their everyday faithfulness to be merciful with ordinary offenses prepared them to handle this extraordinary occasion with extraordinary mercy.

"If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you deny to others, your asking is a mockery. Let this be the pattern for all men when they practice mercy: show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, with the same promptness, as you want others to show mercy to you."—Peter Chrysologus

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**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

First Reading

1. How do you feel about defending yourself, and about meting out justice?
2. What beliefs mitigated David's actions?

Second Reading

3. What are some significant ways that we can "bear the image of the man of heaven"?

Gospel Reading

4. Which of these admonitions do you find the easiest to do? Which is the hardest to do?
5. How would you define the mercy of the Father?
6. What influence should reward (verses 35 and 38) play in our being merciful?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*