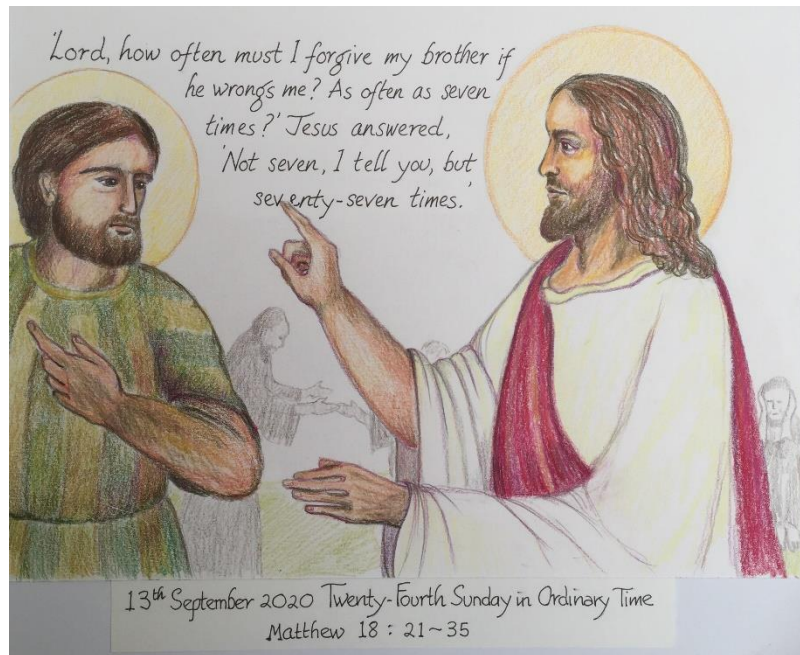


Homily 25
24th Sunday of the Year (A)



Artwork by Moya Hogarth

I read recently the story of Elsa Joseph. She was a Jewish woman who was cut off from her two children, both girls, during the Second World War. Years later she discovered that both her daughters had been gassed at Auschwitz. A former concert violinist, Elsa's response to this tragic news was to pick up her violin and go and play it in Germany. And there in the halls of the homeland of her daughter's killers she played her violin and told her story that cried out to heaven for vengeance. But she did not seek vengeance. She spoke of the world's deep need for reconciliation and forgiveness, without which it was tearing itself apart.

Her courage and forgiveness made a deep impression on all who heard her story. She was not the only one who has experienced such trauma in their lives. Our immediate reaction, when faced with such loss is to seek vengeance. The last thing on our minds is the desire to forgive. And yet on those occasions there have been men and women, who have sought the strength to forgive the aggressors.

That is what our readings are about today. Jesus in his dialogue with Peter speaks of the need we have to forgive those who hurt us. He will offer himself as the ultimate sign of forgiveness as he prays for his executioners as they nail

him to the cross. In the midst of his own suffering he forgives the good thief of his sins as he promises a place with him in heaven.

In the parable it is the King who forgives, his generosity of spirit goes way beyond that expected. It is the cruel steward who tries to extract the smallest of debts from his fellow servant that is condemned. So exceptional is his actions that he alienates his fellow workers and ultimately his master. He gets his just rewards. Remember that Jesus is saying to Peter and through Peter ourselves that the King is our God, he is the one who has forgiven much. He loves us so much that he has forgiven our sins through the actions of his Son, Jesus Christ. We in turn have been asked to forgive so small an amount, yet we are called to make that effort in our lives. Each day we pray that our Father will forgive us as much as we in turn have forgiven others. Do we really mean those words – do we seriously want God to forgive us as we forgive those who offend against us. I know what my answer is. It is obvious that the parable is comparing what God has forgiven each of us with those who owe us so much less than we owe God.

We who receive so much forgiveness and understanding from God are so frequently unable to forgive others or even see things from their point of view. We who crave forgiveness from God frequently fail to even see the need to give it to our brothers and sisters. God's love for us is expressed through his forgiveness freely given, He calls us to be conveyers of his love by the forgiveness we show to others. God uses us as conduits of his love in our simple acts of forgiveness.