

August 13, 2026 – Thursday of the 19th Week

[Ezekiel 12:1-2; Matthew 18:21-19:1](#)

Homily

The rabbinic schools required their disciples to forgive their wives, their children, and their brothers a certain number of times, with that number varying from one school to another. Peter wants to know what the “quota” is according to Jesus. Is it stricter than that of the school that required forgiving a brother who had offended us up to seven times?

Jesus responds with a parable that takes the person out of this system of quotas and invites them to imitate God’s forgiveness. Matthew also emphasizes the incredible difference between the ten thousand talents and the hundred coins (much like the difference between the log and the speck in the eye—see Matt. 7:1-5), to show the infinite distance that separates human ideas about debt and justice from God’s.

Already the Old Testament presented the Lord as a “God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger and abounding in love, who remains faithful for thousands of generations” (see Ex 34:6-7). This boundless love does not, however, mean indifference toward sin. When his people sin, the Lord is filled with anger; but even then he shows his mercy by calling his people to repentance.

Jesus’ entire life, especially his death on the cross, was also an act of boundless mercy. Wherever he went, Jesus waited for the prodigal son. He did not come for those who consider themselves righteous, but for repentant sinners. He sought out the latter just as a shepherd seeks a lost sheep, just as a woman searches for the last silver coin she has lost. Some seem to have been the special objects of his mercy, especially in the Gospel of Luke. These are the poor, women, and foreigners—all those who were excluded or rejected from society by one prohibition or another.

The parable told by Jesus in today’s Gospel contains a theology of the present time, which is the time of the Church—a time given to us for conversion. Matthew thus places the duty of forgiveness in an eschatological context. The last days will come in the form of a sabbatical year (Deut. 15:1-5), during which God will forgive humanity’s enormous debt and offer justification. Some, however, will refuse this gift and condemn themselves to endless misery.

We could say that we are in a time of “probation” or “conditional release.” In our current legal systems, most countries have the concept of “probation,” that is, a temporary and conditional suspension of a convicted person’s sentence, accompanied by a probationary period and measures of assistance and supervision.

We could say that we are in a time of “probation” or “parole.” In current law, most countries have the concept of “probation,” that is, a temporary and conditional suspension of a convicted person’s sentence, accompanied by a probationary period and measures of assistance and supervision.

However, in the account of this parable, the man finds himself caught between two judgments (verses 25-26 and 31-35). The first judgment ended with the debt being forgiven. The second judgment will depend on how the time between the two is used. The man will be definitively forgiven and justified if he uses the probationary period given to him to forgive others and do what is just. The Christian life is, in a sense, a time of probation or parole. We have been acquitted of our sins. This acquittal, however, must be ratified at the end of our life on earth, and will be so only to the extent that we ourselves have practiced forgiveness toward others.

The final words of the parable—“This is how my Father in heaven will treat you, unless each of you forgives your brother from the heart”—remind us, moreover, of the petition we make every day in the Lord’s Prayer: “Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive...”

Among the various paths that lead to the discovery of God, one of the most important is the sinful person’s experience of God’s mercy. However, the forgiveness we have received will remain valid only to the extent that we, too, have forgiven others.