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**Priest in Residence:**  
Rev Fr Antony Maria Joseph

**Disciples  
Making Disciples**

**Excuse me.  
Forgive me.**

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
13 Sep 2020

Sir 27:30--28:7  
Rom 14:7-9  
Mt 18:21-35

As disciples trying our best to follow Jesus, we can find ourselves struggling with the difficult duty to forgive and love those who have hurt us. Perhaps to prevent abuse and unrepentance, the Jewish rabbis in those days recommended that forgiveness be extended not more than three times. Peter thought he was being generous to suggest that one forgives seven times (two times of three and one more added for good measure). However, Jesus gives an ambiguous reply which, in the original text, could mean either 77 times or 70 times seven (490 times).

There are two ways we can go about interpreting today's gospel. On one hand, we might take Jesus' commands literally and keep a scoresheet to make sure others do not wrong us more than 490 times. We might also use the king's response to justify our anger and efforts to bring retribution to the perpetrator. This interpretation focuses on a just God. On the other hand, we can take Jesus' words to the other extreme. Perhaps out of fear of God's judgement on us, we might allow others to take advantage of us or abuse us even when they have proven themselves untrustworthy. This interpretation emphasises a merciful God.

If God is both just and merciful, does he contradict himself?

The parable has an eschatological aspect in its message. It assures us that God is truly just and that justice will ultimately be served at the end of time. We are reminded that it is



God who has the power and right to judge. In light of our last day which is unknown to us, the First Reading encourages us to "stop hating...and live by the commandments" (Sir 28:6). It also says that it is the sinner who "cherishes resentment" (Sir 27:30).

Is it then a sin to be angry? Anger is a right and natural response to witnessing an injustice. But it does not have to be destructive. Forgiveness is the determination to let go of our human compulsion for revenge. It can also mean releasing and channeling the anger towards creative and empowered acts of change to overcome systemic injustice. A resolution that is committed to restorative justice seeks the good of all including the conversion of the wrongdoer. This also means, in the case of abuse, the victim is obligated to take themselves out of the situation so that the wrongdoer cannot continue in his abusive ways. Thus, God's commandment to offer love and mercy is not exploited; evil is not permitted.

In CS Lewis' essay *On Forgiveness*, he distinguishes between forgiving and excusing. When we pray to God asking for forgiveness, many times we are giving a great many reasons to convince God that it is really not our fault at all. Lewis says, "real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without

any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it."

There is a stark difference when others ask us for forgiveness; we do not accept their excuses as easily. This is where Jesus' reply to forgive seventy seven times apply. Indeed he was indicating that it is impractical to keep a scoresheet and so, impractical to weigh excuses. Furthermore, in 1 Cor 13, St Paul writes: "love does not keep a record of wrongdoings" (1 Cor 13:5). We must learn to imitate God who is, as we sing in the psalm, "slow to anger, and rich in mercy" (Ps 103:8). Indeed, "to be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you" (*On Forgiveness*, C.S. Lewis).

"Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God's mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness. For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional" (*Misericordiae et Misera*, Pope Francis). For God to see all the wrongs we have done and decide not to cut us off is truly a gift. We must extend this same gift we have received to others, so that our communion is not an artificial one. To be united to the Father is to be united to the rest of his children.

## Announcements

For announcements in the bulletin, send your requests to [mmm@sfxchurch.sg](mailto:mmm@sfxchurch.sg) by the MONDAY before the weekend, 2359hrs

### BOOKING OF MASSES IN SEPTEMBER

Now that we have the opportunity to attend Mass in person again, do try to come back to church for Mass and to receive Holy Communion. Rest assured that measures have been put in place to adhere to the measures mandated by the government. Although weekday Masses are now fully booked, there are still ample slots available for the weekend Masses. You may visit [MyCatholic.sg](http://MyCatholic.sg) to book your slots. Please make your booking at least 2 days in advance. Do also bring along a photo identification card for verification when you attend Mass.

**Tuesday, Thursday: 6.30pm**

**Saturday: 5.30pm**

**Sunday: 9am, 11am, 1pm, 5.30pm**

### THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

It is available via appointment only. You can contact the Parish Office to make an appointment.

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER MINISTRY

Come storm heaven with us in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament on **Fri 18 Sep 8pm**. All are welcome!

#### ZOOM MEETING DETAILS

Meeting ID: 861 5125 7252

Password: SFXIP18SEP

If you are joining us for the first time, please email [sfxipm@gmail.com](mailto:sfxipm@gmail.com) for pointers for the session.

### SFX CHARISMATIC

The next Charismatic Prayer Meeting via Zoom is on **Mon 14 Sep, 8pm**. There will be praise and worship followed by a talk on "Living the 5Cs: A Spiritual Response in a Post Covid Church" by Charles Lim. All are welcome.

#### ZOOM MEETING DETAILS

Meeting ID: 825 8942 3087

Password: CPGMON1409



### HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU?

Our SFX Intercessory Prayer Ministry will intercede and offer your prayer petitions at their weekly prayer sessions. Please submit your prayer request to [www.sfxchurch.sg/intercessory-prayer](http://www.sfxchurch.sg/intercessory-prayer). Rest assured that all prayer requests are kept confidential.

### ONLINE BOOKING OF COLUMBARIUM VISITS

All visitors to SFX columbarium are required to book a visitation timeslot online via <https://tinyurl.com/SFXColumbarium>.



SCAN TO BOOK

1. This will be on a first-come, first-served basis. All visitors are to fill in their name, NRIC (last three digits and alphabet) and contact number.
2. Do make your online booking one day in advance.
3. **There will be no booking on Public Holidays and Sundays.** The visiting period is from **Mon to Sat: 10am - 12 noon, 2pm - 4pm.**
4. **A maximum of 5 people are allowed per slot.** All visitors are required to wear a mask, check in with SafeEntry for contact tracing and register at the Parish Office for temperature screening.
5. Each visit is for a duration of **20 minutes** (e.g Enter at 10am and exit by 10.20am, next available timeslot will be from 10.30am - 10.50am, etc. If visitors are late for their booked time, no additional time can be accorded).
6. If the group is early, please wait either at the bench in front of JPII Hall or seats located outside the Parish Office. Please be mindful to keep a one-metre distance apart from other groups.

### MASS COLLECTION

Mass collections can be made via:

1. **PayNow** - Launch Paynow service on your bank's app or online website. Select "Send via Unique Entity Number (UEN)" and enter "T08CC4033J". Proceed to check entity Name - Church of St Francis Xavier, then key in Amount. Lastly, key in Ref - Mass Collection.
2. **Cheque** - Payable to Church of St Francis Xavier. Mail cheques to 63A Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558758.

For more information, visit [www.catholic.sg/offertory](http://www.catholic.sg/offertory).

Step-by-step guide: [www.catholic.sg/transfer-funds-via-paynow/](http://www.catholic.sg/transfer-funds-via-paynow/)

### VERBUM DEI: A JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO FAITH (ONLINE RETREAT)

This scripture-based retreat is for all young adults who yearn to encounter God and grow in faith in these uncertain times. Each Saturday session includes input by a Verbum Dei Missionary/Disciple, time for private reflection on the Word of God as well as small group faith sharing. Participants are strongly encouraged to commit to all 4 sessions of the retreat. Register at: <https://verbumdeisingapore.org/forms/a-journey-from-fear-to-faith>

**Date:** 10,17, 24, 31 OCT 2020 (SATURDAYS) | **Time:** 10.30 - 12PM | **Cost:** \$10

### TEMPORARY ONLINE MASS OFFERINGS

Please submit your intention **1 WEEK in advance and wait for the Finance Department to contact you. They will provide you with a "Reference No"**, MO xxx (eg MO 001). Key in the given referral number upon making payment via PayNow (**T08CC4033J**). Your intentions will be offered up during our priests' private masses.

### MASS COLLECTION FOR THE HOLY LAND

Collection for all Masses on **Sun 13 Sep** will be for the Holy Land; to support over 10,000 children in schools, senior citizens and provide homes and jobs for Christian families through a wide range of services. Please give generously to support our brothers and sisters in Christ in the Holy Land.

# Confirmed and Sent Forth

Over three Masses on Sat 5 Sep, 25 teens were given the Sacrament of Confirmation and told that they now had a "mission" to perform. Fr Ben challenged the teens to use their God-given "talents" for the church and God and not bury them, like in the parable of the servant who was given five talents in Matt 25:14-30.

Due to the new rules on numbers attending Masses and social distancing, each Mass could only accommodate 9 teens with their 4 guests. Though it was different from the large Confirmation Masses that had hitherto been the norm, the smaller group size did not take away the essence of the Sacrament and the fact that the Sacraments Are a Really Big Deal for all of us.

"It is particularly important for us to teach children that Sacraments are so much more than a ceremony to prepare for; they are God's way of reaching down to us and offering us a lifelong gift - a gift of grace that gives us a glimpse of heaven and a taste of eternity," writes Elizabeth Kelly, an award-winning speaker and the author of six books, including "Reasons I Love Being Catholic".

Some of the recently confirmed youths share their thoughts with us here.



Let us continue to keep our youths in prayer as they cope with their studies at this stage in their lives and to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit that has been poured onto them.

If you would like to send them a note of support and/or encouragement, you may do so on our parish Facebook and Instagram account; or drop them an email at [mmm@sfxchurch.sg](mailto:mmm@sfxchurch.sg).



"For the first seven years of catechism, I never truly understood the power of God and why being confirmed was such an important event. However, as I continued to learn about God and grow in my faith, I realised that God is of sole importance in our lives. He has given me much guidance through my catechists and the church community and He has never led me astray. Without Him, I would not be where I am today, confirmed and a proud member of the Catholic community." - **Chaska Tan**

"I have journeyed in faith with most of my confirmation batch of friends since 2011. It has been enjoyable as well as enriching. Through all the catechism sessions with the catechists, bible sharing, praise & worship with the youths and ministry attachment, I have come to know more about God, lean more on Him and have made good friendships with those in my batch.

As I continue to grow in faith, I hope that all of us in the Catholic community are guided by the Holy Spirit to help those around us." - **Zachary Elijah Raphael Mowe**



"I have always placed God and the church on the backburner, often making my studies and social life take top priority instead. I am greatly touched by Luke 15:24 as I feel that my journey to Confirmation has brought me into the loving arms of God again." - **Ignatius Mark Chua**

"Although doing the reading at Mass was nerve-wrecking, feeling God's presence helped calm me and I was able to deliver His Good News. This journey has been a rollercoaster ride, but regardless of all the uncertainties, God's grace enabled me to persevere and continue to trust in Him." - **Clara Magdalene Lee**





Looking for more Information?  
visit [www.sfxchurch.sg](http://www.sfxchurch.sg)



"To be honest, when I was asked to do the first reading and responsorial psalm, I wasn't very keen. Reading from the scriptures during Mass had always seemed to be a sort of duty reserved for "holy" people with a certain amount of piety. In short, I had never actually wanted to be a lector. But somehow, God willing, I agreed to do it.

Reading the Word has never been a light issue to me. It's law. Rules and regulations. A sort of contract stating what to adhere to and what to remember if you want to get to heaven. On the lector's pulpit, the feeling of reading a heavy, very weighty lawful document is multiplied tenfold. This is because of the audience. When you read the Bible to people, you automatically become very aware of all the souls that could be affected by His Word. That is what happened to me. It was by no means an easily forgettable feeling, for it was one that showed me the power that God can wield through His Word." - **Shauna Isabelle Lucia Trinidad**

"Catechism has always been fun to attend. I get to be around friends who share the same interests as me, as well as learn about my faith in a relaxed environment. My journey to Confirmation has been spiritually fulfilling thanks to my family's support and the catechists who taught me about the bible and how the stories relate to our present world, such as, when you help someone, you are doing God's work. That helped me put things in perspective, realising that my Lord is always with me. All I have learned and experienced empowers me to share my faith more confidently with my non-Catholic friends." - **Trinity Marie Olivia David**



## Come back for Mass!

Sadly, empty seats have been a familiar sight since our church re-opened for public Masses. The initial sadness and emptiness most of us felt when Masses were first suspended may have gradually been replaced by inertia that has caused many to continue to stay away from the church; lifted from the "obligation" to attend Mass physically, together with the convenience of watching online Masses or even not watching at all.

For those who still have not registered for or attended any of the Masses in church, do reconsider and take the step to do so. Watching an online Mass simply cannot replace the feeling of gathering with our church community to worship our God together; and to receive Holy Communion which is one of the greatest blessings God has gifted to us. Moreover, we are indeed fortunate to be able to worship in air-conditioned comfort in our new parish hall!

For those who have stayed away because they are concerned about Covid-19 infection, when making the decision on whether to come back to church, do note that measures have been put in place to adhere to the rules mandated by the government. In fact, it is probably safer to attend Mass in our church than jostle with the crowds in markets, shopping centres and eateries.

**DON'T HESITATE. COME HOME!**

### Mass Timings

#### WEEKDAY MASSES

**Tue & Thur:**  
6.30pm

#### WEEKEND MASSES

**Sat Sunset:**  
5.30pm

*(There is currently no Novena at 4.45pm)*

**Sun:** 9am, 11am, 1pm, 5.30pm  
*(There is currently no Confession before Mass)*

#### MASS ON PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Suspended until further notice

#### HOLY HOUR

Suspended until further notice

### Opening Hours

#### PARISH OFFICE

For pastoral care services (e.g anointing, funerals etc), you may contact before coming at the following hours.

#### Mon - Sat:

9.30am - 6.30pm  
**Sun:** 8.30am - 2pm

#### ADORATION ROOM

Closed until further notice

#### LIBRARY

Closed until further notice

#### COLUMBARIUM

<https://tinyurl.com/SFXColumbarium>  
*(by appointment only)*

### ANOINTING OF THE SICK



The sacrament can be administered to any Catholic awaiting serious surgery, suffering from serious illness or weakened by old age. Anointing may be given before admission for the anticipated medical procedure. Contact the Parish Office to request for a priest. In emergencies, priests of the church nearest to the hospital can be contacted.

### INFANT BAPTISM



For more information, please contact the Parish Office for Baptism of Infants.

### FUNERAL



Please check with the Parish Office for priest availability and Mass timing before confirming the timing at the crematorium. For prayers at the wake, please contact the Parish Office.

### MARRIAGE



Contact the Parish Office 12 months before your intended date to book the church premises and ensure that your presiding priest is able to make that date. Church unavailable from 1 Nov 2018 due to renovations.

### MASS OFFERING



Mass offering envelopes are available outside the Parish Office and Church. Submit your envelopes at least two weeks in advance of your intended date. Please write the names clearly, and in block letters.

### VOLUNTEER & SHARE YOUR GIFTS!

If you're interested in content curation and design layout, contact [mmm@sfxchurch.sg](mailto:mmm@sfxchurch.sg)