

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sunday Mass Readings & Spiritual Leadership Guide

September 13, 2026 · Lectionary 130

Sunday Mass Readings

FIRST READING

Sirach 27:30—28:7

Wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight. The vengeful will suffer the LORD's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. 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? If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor; remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

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, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

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, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

He will not always chide, nor does he keep his wrath forever. 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, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so surpassing is his kindness toward those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.

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by Following Christ and the Teachings of His Church***



SECOND READING

Romans 14:7–9

Brothers and sisters: None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For this is why Christ died and came to life, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:21–35

Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart."

All readings sourced from USCCB, Lectionary 130. bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091326.cfm

Reflection

Sirach warns that wrath and anger can become things we hug tight, even while they poison the soul that clings to them. The Psalm reminds us that God does not deal with us according to our sins, but crowns us with kindness and compassion. Paul grounds everything in belonging: whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. In the Gospel, Jesus exposes the scandal of receiving mercy while refusing to extend it. Spiritual leadership shaped by these readings begins with memory—remembering the mercy received, remembering our last days, and remembering that everyone we lead belongs first to the Lord. Forgiveness is the deliberate choice of love that, while not forgetting the offense, lets go of revenge and seeks the well being of the offender; it is the refusal to let resentment become our master.

Leadership Principles

PRINCIPLE 1

Do Not Hug What Is Hateful

Sirach says wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight (Sir 27:30). We often can become attached to resentment because it feels justified. But what we hug eventually shapes us.

PRINCIPLE 2

Forgiveness Begins with Memory

The Psalm says to forget not all God's benefits (Ps 103:2). Those who lead their families forgive more freely when they remember how freely they have been forgiven. Mercy received becomes mercy extended.

PRINCIPLE 3

People Belong to the Lord Before They Belong to You

Paul says whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (Rom 14:8). We must not treat people as possessions, problems, or enemies. Every person belongs first to Christ.

PRINCIPLE 4

Received Mercy Must Become Given Mercy

The unforgiving servant accepted a huge mercy but refused a small one (Mt 18:32–33). Leadership loses integrity when mercy flows in but stops with us. Grace is meant to pass through us, not terminate with us.

PRINCIPLE 5

Forgive from the Heart

Jesus ends with the command to forgive from the heart (Mt 18:35). External politeness is not enough if the heart keeps a ledger. We are called to do the inner work of releasing debt, not merely managing appearances.

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Discussion Questions

QUESTION 1

Sirach says wrath and anger are hateful things, yet the sinner hugs them tight (Sir 27:30). What resentment are you most tempted to keep close because it feels justified?

QUESTION 2

The Psalm says God does not deal with us according to our sins (Ps 103:10). How does remembering God's mercy toward you change the way you view someone who has failed you?

QUESTION 3

Paul says none of us lives for oneself (Rom 14:7). How does belonging to the Lord reshape the way you handle conflict, correction, or disappointment with others?

QUESTION 4

In the parable, the servant received immense mercy but refused to extend small mercy (Mt 18:28–30). Where are you at risk of becoming a bottleneck of mercy?

QUESTION 5

Jesus calls for forgiveness from the heart (Mt 18:35). What would need to change internally—not just externally—for you to forgive more fully?

Closing Action

A concrete, personal response drawn from the readings this week:

This week, name one debt you are still carrying against someone. Write it down plainly, then pray through Psalm 103, asking God to show you the mercy you have received. Take one concrete step toward release: stop rehearsing the offense, bless the person in prayer, or begin a conversation if reconciliation is possible without bringing harm to yourself.

“Forgive your neighbor’s injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.” — Sirach 28:2

Closing Prayer

Lord God, you are kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion. Teach us not to hug wrath or protect resentment as though it were treasure.

Jesus, you forgave us a debt we could never repay. Let that mercy move through us toward those who have hurt, failed, or disappointed us.

Holy Spirit, help us forgive from the heart. Free us from ledgers, bitterness, and pride, and make us a witness to the mercy of Christ. Amen.

“The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in compassion.” — Psalm 103:8