

7th Sunday of Ordinary Time

Sunday February 19

Leviticus 19:1-2,17-18
Ps 103:1-4,8,10,
12-13 (8a)
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
Matthew 5:38-48

Monday February 20

Sirach 1:1-10
Ps 93:1ab,1cd-2,5
Mark 9:14-29

Tuesday February 21

Sirach 2:1-11
Ps 37:3-4,18-19,27-28,
39-40
Mark 9:30-37

Wednesday February 22

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-18
Ps 51:3-6ab,12-14,17
2 Corinthians 5:20 — 6:2
Matthew 6:1-6,16-18

Thursday February 23

Deuteronomy 30:15-20
Ps 1:1-4,6
Luke 9:22-25

Friday February 24

Isaiah 58:1-9a
Ps 51:3-6ab,18-19
Matthew 9:14-15

Saturday February 25

Isaiah 58:9b-14
Ps 86:1-6
Luke 5:27-32

Mercy is the key to understanding this Sunday's Gospel reading. Think of love as the front door to people's hearts. When they close it, mercy is the love that sneaks in through the back door.

In ancient times, if someone gouged another person in the eye, the victim could gather his clan and punish him by wiping out his aggressor's clan. So God gave his people a law that brought them closer to love: If someone hurts your eye, you may do nothing more than the same to him. It was still unloving, but at least it was fair.

When Jesus came onto the scene, he raised the standards: If someone hurts you, don't play fair; give that person love.

When people sin against us, they don't understand that they're closing their hearts to God and his love. But if we give them love, we give them God through a back door.

This does not mean we are to remain in harm's way. But if we continue to give them love – even if only from afar – we bring God and his healing into the situation.

If someone steals from you or demands something from you unjustly, you can't stop his greed but you can stop him from sinning against you: Let it go, give it to him. And as an act of generous love, give him more! I know it doesn't feel right, but this is what Jesus says *is* right. Divinely right.

If someone asks you to do a chore for her because she's lazy, prevent it from becoming a sin of cruelty; gladly do what she asks and volunteer to do more.



This plan of Jesus demonstrates, through us, that God's love is superior to everything else. It proves that love conquers evil.

This is what it means to be perfect. Perfection in the Bible means the fullness of love – complete, unlimited, merciful love.

Reflect & Discuss:

- † Think of a time when God showed you mercy even though you didn't deserve his love. What did it feel like when he gave you his love anyway? How did it change you?
- † Who is currently sinning against you? What good deeds can you do simply and easily even before he or she asks for forgiveness?
- † Describe a time when you did a good deed to someone who caused you difficulties. What kind of impact did your efforts make? If you're not aware of good results yet, how did it help *you* experience God's love?
- † How can stopping an abuse be done as an act of love?