

# Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Year C



**FIRST READING**  
1 Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13,  
22–23

**PSALM**  
Psalm 103:1–4, 8, 10, 12–13

**SECOND READING**  
1 Corinthians 15:45–49

**GOSPEL**  
Luke 6:27–38

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### PRAYER

**Psalm 103:1–4, 8, 10, 12–13**

Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.  
Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits—  
who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you  
with steadfast love and mercy,  
The LORD is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger  
and abounding in steadfast love.  
He does not deal with us  
according to our sins,  
nor repay us  
according to our iniquities.  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes  
our transgressions from us.  
As a father  
has compassion for his children,  
so the LORD has compassion  
for those who fear him.

### READING THE WORD

#### First Reading

**1 Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23**

Saul rose and went down to the Wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the Wilderness of

Ziph. Then David and Abishai went to the army by night; there Saul lay sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him. Abishai said to David, “God has given your enemy into your hand today; now therefore let me pin him to the ground with one stroke of the spear; I will not strike him twice.” But David said to Abishai, “Do not destroy him; for who can raise his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?”

So David took the spear that was at Saul’s head and the water jar, and they went away. No one saw it, or knew it, nor did anyone awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them.

David went over to the other side, and stood on top of a hill far away, with a great distance between them. He then called out, “Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and get it. The Lord rewards everyone for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord gave you into my hand today, but I would not raise my hand against the Lord’s anointed.

#### Second Reading

**1 Corinthians 15:45–49**

Thus it is written, “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spir-

it. But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

#### Gospel

**Luke 6:27–38**

Jesus said, “I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your re-

ward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

## HEARING THE WORD

### “Preserve Life”

All life comes from God, and needs to be lived in a manner that God envisioned, but there are many factors that threaten and undermine it. Today’s liturgy highlights the need for the protection of the divine life in this world and the ways to achieve it.

Saul was the first king of Israel. His chief task was to lead the united twelve tribes in a fight against a new and powerful enemy – the Philistines. Initially successful, Saul strayed from the right path, coming into conflict with the prophet Samuel, treating the kingdom as his own property and fighting wars for his own glory. Soon, Saul lost God’s favour and David was anointed a king in his place. Starting with his famous battle against Goliath, David quickly gained recognition as a skilful military leader, and became very popular with the people. Saul, driven by insane jealousy and fear for his position, attempted to kill his rival on several occasions, eventually forcing

David to flee into the wilderness. Pursuing him, Saul was ironically delivered into David’s hands when the latter sneaked into the camp and found the king deeply asleep. Now, David had a chance to strike and eliminate his persecutor once and for all. But he did not take this opportunity to exact vengeance. Obedient to God’s decree which protected the King, he spared Saul’s life.

David did not take Saul’s life but only his spear, and his water jar. Standing far away David showed these two items to Saul as a proof that he had disarmed the violent king and could have ended his life. The difference between the two men is striking. Saul, the king appointed to protect his people, was determined to kill David, one of his subjects, out of simple jealousy. David, because he obeyed God’s laws, refused to take the king’s life, which would have protected his own life from future attack by the king. By being a faithful protector of life according to God’s law, David proved himself worthy to be the future king of Israel.

The second reading continues Paul’s discussion on the resurrection of the dead. Addressing the Corinthians’ doubts regarding the nature of the risen body, Paul uses an analogy of Adam and Christ. The first human being, Adam, was created from the dust of the earth. Christ, “the last Adam” became a living-giving spirit. Adam symbolizes that which is physical, while Christ

stands for that which is spiritual. Consequently, the physical body will return to dust, while those who are united to Christ the life-giver, will have their body transformed and return to heaven.

Using this extensive symbolism Paul teaches his doubting Christians that the resurrection involves both discontinuity and continuity. The earthly body will be “discontinued” because it belongs to the physical world, and will be transformed into a spiritual body that belongs to the heavenly world. At the same time, there will be continuity between the earthly life and the life of heaven. It will be the same people who will enter the heavenly world with their transformed bodies, which will be like the body of the risen Christ, the “man of heaven”. This transformation means that God will preserve the human life which began on earth, even if the physical body must undergo physical death. By sending Jesus into the world to die and rise, God made it possible for earthly life to continue into the heavenly world.

Today’s gospel passage contains some of Jesus’ most difficult teachings. Jesus urges his listeners to do what seems unnatural and almost unthinkable to an ordinary human mind. First, he commands them to love their enemies, do good to them, bless and pray for them, turn the other cheek when struck, give without restrictions and not to ask for the return of goods ei-

ther freely given or forcibly taken. He then commands that one should not judge or condemn, but instead forgive and give. What is the reason and the purpose of these shocking demands, which require a complete revision of one's value system, and one's view of human relationships?

First, Jesus provides a threefold motivation for these challenging instructions. First, Jesus quotes the golden rule, "do to others as you would have them do to you". This rule means that all human beings, both the victims and the perpetrators, deserve humane treatment and share the same dignity, regardless of their behaviour. The second motivation evokes God's own example. Since God is kind to "the ungrateful and the wicked", so also God's children ought to extend their kind and merciful behaviour not only to their friends but even to their opponents and enemies. Third, Jesus states that, "the measure you give will be the measure you get back". This implies that the unmerited acts of generosity, kindness and forgiveness will ultimately benefit those who practice them. More importantly however, those enemies who experience kindness, forgiveness and non-retaliation from their victims might see their errors and turn away from their wicked ways.

What is the purpose of practicing these difficult acts summarized under the heading "love your enemies"? Jesus certainly does not teach that wicked and harmful people deserve

one's emotional affection and approval. No! However, Jesus outlines an alternative way of responding to the wrongdoing by others aimed at bringing the evil-doers to conversion. Violence, vengeance, insistence on one's rights and condemnation create ever more conflicts that destabilize individuals and communities. By responding with kindness, care and non-retaliation, Jesus' followers have a chance to put an end to selfishness, abuse and even violence, and perhaps bring about the conversion of the perpetrators of those wicked acts. By not responding to hatred with hatred, Jesus' followers have a chance at preventing violence spreading. By showing kindness to the wrongdoers they have a chance to bring them to conversion. Finally, by acting in this different manner they show the world who their God is - a merciful and life-giving Father who does not destroy his enemies but sustains their life. By not acting for the destruction of their enemies, but preserving and even sustaining their lives, Christians become truly "children of the Most High", acting as his agents to transform the violence of human society according to God's vision of life.

This Sunday's message reveals God's concern with the preservation and protection of life at all cost. Following God's rules, David spared Saul's life, sacrificing his own safety. Paul reminds the Corinthians that Jesus became for them a life-giving spirit. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus God acted to preserve their

lives, making a transformation from the earthly to heavenly body possible. Jesus taught a difficult lesson on preserving and restoring life through the love of enemies. This love means acting with kindness and forgiveness even towards the wrongdoers who do not deserve it. Such actions resemble God's ways and are a path to the transformation of this world and life itself according to God's own design. For the believers it means being God's children in this world. The God who, in the words of the Psalmist, "does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities".

## **LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD**

The cry of a new born is always a joyful sound to the ears of the African people and the death of a person devastates them. The same is likely true of all peoples of the world who see life as a precious gift from God that is to be nurtured and protected by all. Being alive is the most visible blessing from almighty God, one that is often taken for granted and unappreciated. We must remember daily that we have been gifted with life, and celebrate life in gratitude to the one who gave us this gift.

Today's first reading shows how David recognized the preciousness of Saul's life, even though Saul was his enemy. This teaches us that life must not be extinguished by anyone, or for any reason because it was

neither created by us nor given by us in the first place. Since it is a gift from God we cannot consider ourselves as creators of our own lives, or the lives of others. We are life's custodians, entrusted with the task of preserving the lives of others because we are all children gifted with the breath of God. God created us in his image and likeness, and saw that it was good. God wants us to nurture his life in and among us, both spiritually and physically, and that is the reason why he gave us his son; the man of heaven. Jesus taught that the chief way to nurture and preserve life in this world is love, the love of others and love of oneself.

Today, Jesus invites us especially to love our enemies and bless those who curse us. It is never easy to love our enemies but with the grace of God we can, and it brings more grace than loving those who love us in return. Loving others means having a compassionate heart that forgives the wrong done to me. It is never easy to turn the other cheek, it is never easy to accept a person that you think is against your progress, it is never easy to accept criticism from others, and it is never easy to accept a friend who betrayed you. Loving enemies means willingness to be compassionate and kind without expecting the same in return. It is a difficult and demanding teaching. However, it is also one of the important ways of preserving life in our day-to-day dealings with others.

Preserving life also means

loving oneself. It begins with appreciating the simplest things, such as being grateful for the fact that I woke up this morning, I am breathing, I can do things and decide what to do with my time. Surely, we all have limitations and challenges, we might be physically challenged, ill, jobless, not very intelligent, alone. Every one of us has his or her set of things and circumstances that limit and diminish our life. Still, above all these things WE ARE, and we are here because God gave us this precious gift. Surely, life can be very difficult. Some people cannot bear the pain and take their own lives. You cannot blame them, only to mourn that there was no one to help them to see the beauty of life hidden somewhere beyond the curtain of pain. But before we even begin reaching out to others, we must be able to value our own life and see it as a gift. This is our God-given task and the starting point for being his joyful and grateful children.

### PROVERB

*“Happiness requires something to do, something to love and something to hope for.”*

### ACTION

#### Self-examination:

Do I appreciate sufficiently the gift of my life, and am I grateful for the lives of those around me? Have I ever contemplated taking my own life? What was the reason?

#### Response to God:

My first words every morning of this week will be those of a gratitude prayer for God giving me yet another day to live.

#### Response to your World:

I will make an effort to implement Jesus' difficult teaching on loving the enemies in my environment. How can it be done? Who are those in our environment we are in conflict with? As a group, what are the ways in which we can show them our love in accordance with Jesus' instructions?

### PRAYER

*Thank you Lord for the gift of my life, for your everyday blessings and for the gift of people in my life. Teach me to cherish your gift of life in me and to respect and protect the lives of others at all time. Empower me to be the ambassador of your life in this world. Amen.*