

Christianity is unique among religions in our belief in the intensity of God's love and God's closeness to us and God's desire to forgive us. That is not surprising since only Christianity enjoys the fullness of God's self-revelation in Jesus. God revealed himself in Jesus and revealed his closeness to us and desire to forgive us.

At the time of Jesus some rabbis taught that there was a **limit to the times one would forgive**. They said you should forgive three times

When Peter asked Jesus if he should forgive seven times he was being cocky as only Peter can do! He gave **the perfect number** which he and everyone know is **Seven...** Why?...(because it is the combination of both 3 and 4...Three being the number for God...the Triune God and 4 represented the earth...North, South, East and West. The bringing together of God and His creation, and us in his image and likeness makes for perfection. Seven is also the number of days for all of creation.) **He gave the perfect answer by giving the perfect number and it is more than double what was expected at the time!**

Jesus responded, **not just seven times, but seventy-seven times. In other words, there is to be no limit to our forgiveness.** To teach us Jesus then proceeds to tell a parable. A king forgave a servant a huge sum owed. Our translation of Matthew's Greek doesn't bring out the size of the sum owed, it was **10,000 talents. One talent was 6,000 times the daily wage, so 10,000 talents is 60 million times the daily wage.** This amount was so huge that no servant could ever pay it back. The king forgave the servant. This servant then meets a fellow servant who owes him 100 denarii. **A denarius was one day's wage. He is owed 100 days' wages, which is nothing by comparison with the 60 million days' wages that he has just been forgiven** by the king. Nevertheless, he doesn't forgive and is then punished by the king. The point of Jesus' parable is that the debt of our sin is beyond what we can humanly pay back to our heavenly Father. Jesus paid that price for us on Calvary.

When someone offends us **Jesus asks us to forgive, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times, i.e. to forgive always. We have been forgiven 60 million days' wages by God through Jesus and when someone offends us we are asked to forgive the paltry sum of 100 days' wages by comparison.**

Just to give you a little more numerology. Since 7 is the perfect number, 77 is one step above perfection. Then 777 is the perfection of God...and not only a winning combination on a Slot Machine

Just to carry the image a little further! 6 is an imperfect number...Just missing the mark of perfection. 66 is one step below imperfection...and 666 well you know what that number means...The mark of the beast.

One of the repeating themes of Matthew's Gospel, is this...just as the Apostles think that they finally get what Jesus is saying...he raises the bar. You think 7 is the perfect answer well, let me show you the perfect answer.

Think back two week ago in the Gospel where Jesus admonishes Peter. After telling Peter that he must suffer and be put to death at the hands of the Leaders, Peter says, God forbid it, that you should ever have to suffer that fate. And Jesus says, "Get behind me Satan" ...You are an obstacle to me...now a stumbling rock. You are thinking not as God but as Man.

And here we find Peter, thinking as a generous man, instead of the magnanimous God of love and forgiveness. 7? No...77 and then you might begin to act as 777...God himself.

**Jesus leads us in forgiving and is for us a model in forgiving those who have hurt us. We see this above all during Jesus' Passion.**

- When Jesus and the apostles were in Gethsemane, soldiers came from the Sanhedrin to arrest Jesus. There was a scuffle and Peter cut off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest named Malchus (John 18:10) But Jesus told Peter to put his sword away (John 18:11) and he touched **Malchus' ear and healed it** (Luke 22:51). Jesus forgave and physically healed the one who came to arrest him. This is not the only healing incident that takes place during Jesus' Passion; Pilate and Herod had been enemies but became friends on the day of Jesus' trial (Luke 23:12).
- During his trial before the high priest one of the **officers slapped Jesus** (John 18:22). Jesus responded calmly asking him to point out whatever was erroneous in Jesus' statements (John 18:23).

- When Jesus was being crucified he prayed for his crucifixioners and persecutors, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)
- After Jesus’ resurrection when Peter and the others were fishing, Jesus appeared on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (John 21) cooking fish over a charcoal fire. When they came ashore after breakfast three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. Each time Peter professed his love for Christ and each time Jesus asked him to look after the flock. **Three times by a charcoal fire (John 18:18) Peter had denied Jesus by the high priest’s house. Now three times by another charcoal fire Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, and Jesus restores Peter again. Once again we see the forgiveness of Christ.**

Everyone knows forgiving is not easy and may be difficult depending on the person and events involved but it is the only way forward. Forgiveness is at the heart of Jesus message and reason for coming into the world. He came to save us from our sins by the forgiveness of an ever loving God.

Since God has forgiven 60 million days’ wages of sin and then maybe we need to find a way to forgive a paltry 100 days’ wages.

**Let us think and forgive like our perfect God...and Hit the jackpot...love! AMEN**

Inspired by Fr. Tommy Lane 2011