

# realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



## Today's Readings:

Forgive and be forgiven. Sirach 27:30-28:7  
We influence each other. Rom 14:7-9  
How many times must I forgive? Mt 18:21-35

## Next Week:

The right to be generous  
Is 55:6-9; Phil 1:20-24,27;  
Mt 20:1-16

## In a nutshell

The servant in today's parable had no way of repaying the debt he owed his master. The master, filled with compassion, releases the man from his debt. This story teaches us about the infinite mercy of God, and the gospel call to love and forgive without measure. As the Church, our spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation must have no limits.



## Peace starts with me

*Seventeen-year-old Rocky shares this story about the fruits of God's forgiveness.*

One day I was walking with boys from my school to a soccer game when we passed the local Jewish school. The students were coming out of school and one of my school mates made a remark to a Jewish boy about his 'hat'. Not wanting to be left out of the group I regrettably joined in the ridicule.

Thinking at the time that it was all harmless and amusing, it was not until later on that night that I realised what distress I may have caused that boy. The question arose in my head: 'Is the fear of being left out more important to me than being a Christian?'

This incident ate at me for days. All I wanted to do was ask for that boy's forgiveness. Knowing that the odds of me seeing him again were quite low, I decided to ask the forgiveness of God. It was whilst doing so that I was hit by curiosity as to what that little 'hat' actually was. After doing some research I

discovered that it was called the *kippah* and it is worn by Jewish males as a gesture of respect to God, recognising God's constant presence. This made me even more curious. I wanted to learn more about Judaism.

Although I was involved in that unfortunate incident, through seeking God's forgiveness I was able to learn, come to accept and appreciate a religious culture other than my own. This example might seem minute compared to the conflict in the Middle East. But I believe that if people take the time to learn about one another and to accept one another, it will be one step forward on the road to peace.

## Radical forgiveness

I am involved in running a religious renewal program for people in prison. Those who participate receive a lot of flack from the other inmates.

On one occasion a man was bashed on the way back to his cell for the simple fact of being part of 'that Christian thing'. Yet he refused to reveal to the warden the name of his assailant—even when threatened with an extended sentence—for no other reason than that he wanted to forgive another human being 'like God has forgiven me'.

The inmate who had bashed him was deeply affected by this response. So much so that, three or four programs later, he signed up and experienced 'the Christian thing' for himself. (NF)



## Ten ways to become a more forgiving person

1. Don't allow wounds to fester. Face into hurts as they occur.
2. Two little words with great power: 'I'm sorry.'
3. Make the Sacrament of Reconciliation part of your life.
4. Pray for the grace of compassion.
5. Be aware of the big picture, not just that part which has offended you.
6. Try 'walking in the shoes' of another person.
7. Enter prayerfully into those prayers of the Mass which express God's infinite mercy.
8. Where forgiveness seems 'impossible', be patient and take small healing steps each day.
9. Have hope! Be realistic about a situation of conflict, but never give up on another person.
10. Teach a child about forgiveness... we learn best what we teach others.

*Add your own thoughts to this list...*



**RealPeople** offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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