Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Move your church throughout the world away from judging and despising others. Lead us to embody the forgiveness you have given us in Jesus. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

The endless beauty of your creation reminds us of your mercy. Protect those who care for farms and ranches. Guide those who lead us to wonder at your creation. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Raise up leaders (*like John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, whom we remember today*) to hold all in authority accountable for any misuse of the power entrusted to them. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Calm the fears of all in need with your promises. Compassionately free the lives of any who feel bound by their failures. Remember your children in need (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Ground this congregation in the welcome you show us in forgiving our sin. Inspire each of us to welcome others for your honor and glory. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

With you is found the joy and promise of eternal life. Keep us in that joy as we remember (*name/s, and*) all those who have gone before us. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (Holy Cross Day) John 3:13-17. **Tuesday** Psalm 133. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, martyr, died around 258) Genesis 50:22-26. **Thursday** (commemoration of Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, died 1179) Psalm 145:1-8. **Friday** (commemoration of Dag Hammarskjöld, renewer of society, died 1961) 2 Corinthians 13:5-10. **Saturday** Zephaniah 2:13-15. **Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost** Jonah 3:10—4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16.

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ITEM014661 Tracks 1 and 2

Celebrate

Sunday, September 13, 2026
16th Sunday after Pentecost

In today's second reading Paul questions why we judge one another, since we all stand before the judgment of God. Yet we do sin against one another, and Jesus' challenge that we forgive seventy-seven times reveals God's boundless mercy. When we hear the words of forgiveness in worship and sign ourselves with the cross, we are renewed in baptism to be signs of reconciliation in the world.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, merciful judge, you are the inexhaustible fountain of forgiveness. Replace our hearts of stone with hearts that love and adore you, that we may delight in doing your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

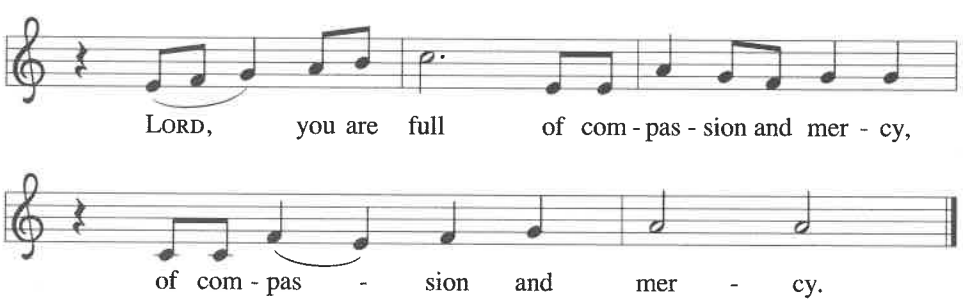
First Reading — Genesis 50:15-21

After Jacob's death the brothers of Joseph begged for forgiveness for the crime they had done against him. You intended to do me harm, Joseph said, but God used this as an opportunity to do good and save many lives.

Realizing that their father was dead,
Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph
still bears a grudge against us and pays us
back in full for all the wrong that we did
to him?" [16]So they approached Joseph,
saying, "Your father gave this instruction
before he died, [17]'Say to Joseph: I beg you,
forgive the crime of your brothers and
the wrong they did in harming you.' Now
therefore please forgive the crime of the
servants of the God of your father." Joseph
wept when they spoke to him. [18]Then his
brothers also wept, fell down before him,
and said, "We are here as your slaves."
[19]But Joseph said to them, "Do not be
afraid! Am I in the place of God? [20]Even
though you intended to do harm to me,
God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing
today. [21]So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this
way he reassured them, speaking kindly
to them.

Psalm

Psalm 103:[1-7] 8-13; refrain, Ps. 103:8



[Bless the LORD, | O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless God's | holy name.
[2]**Bless the LORD, | O my soul,**
and forget not | all God's benefits—
[3]who forgives | all your sins
and heals all | your diseases;
[4]**who redeems your life | from the grave**
and crowns you with steadfast | love and mercy; **R**
[5]who satisfies your desires | with good things
so that your youth is renewed | like an eagle's.
[6]**O LORD, you provide | vindication**
and justice for all who | are oppressed.
[7]You made known your | ways to Moses
and your works to the chil- | dren of Israel.]
[8]**LORD, you are full of compas- | sion and mercy,**
slow to anger and abounding in | steadfast love; **R**
[9]you will not al- | ways accuse us,
nor will you keep your an- | ger forever.
[10]**You have not dealt with us according | to our sins,**
nor repaid us according to | our iniquities.
[11]For as the heavens are high a- | bove the earth,
so great is your steadfast love for | those who fear you.
[12]**As far as the east is | from the west,**
so far have you removed our transgres- | sions from us.
[13]As a father has compassion | for his children,
so you have compassion for those who fear | you, O LORD. **R**

Second Reading

Romans 14:1-12

This Christian community has significant struggles with diversity. Here Paul helps us understand that despite different practices in worship and personal piety, we do not judge one another. All Christians belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who died for all of us and will judge each of us.

Welcome those who are weak in faith but
not for the purpose of quarreling over
opinions. [2]Some believe in eating any-
thing, while the weak eat only vegetables.
[3]Those who eat must not despise those
who abstain, and those who abstain must
not pass judgment on those who eat, for
God has welcomed them. [4]Who are you to
pass judgment on slaves of another? It is
before their own lord that they stand or
fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord
is able to make them stand.
[5]Some judge one day to be better than
another, while others judge all days to be
alike. Let all be fully convinced in their
own minds. [6]Those who observe the day,
observe it for the Lord. Also those who
eat, eat for the Lord, since they give
thanks to God, while those who abstain,
abstain for the Lord and give thanks to
God.
[7]For we do not live to ourselves, and we
do not die to ourselves. [8]If we live, we live
to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the
Lord; so then, whether we live or whether
we die, we are the Lord's. [9]For to this end
Christ died and lived again, so that he
might be Lord of both the dead and the
living.
[10]Why do you pass judgment on your
brother or sister? Or you, why do you de-
spise your brother or sister? For we will all
stand before the judgment seat of God.
[11]For it is written,

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee
shall bow to me,
and every tongue shall give praise
to God."

[12]So then, each one of us will be held
accountable.

Gospel

Matthew 18:21-35

When Peter asks about the limits of forgiveness, Jesus responds with a parable that suggests human forgiveness should mirror the unlimited mercy of God.

Peter came and said to [Jesus,] "Lord, if
my brother or sister sins against me, how
often should I forgive? As many as seven
times?" [22]Jesus said to him, "Not seven
times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.
[23]"For this reason the kingdom of heav-
en may be compared to a king who wished
to settle accounts with his slaves. [24]When
he began the reckoning, one who owed
him ten thousand talents was brought to
him, [25]and, as he could not pay, the lord
ordered him to be sold, together with his
wife and children and all his possessions
and payment to be made. [26]So the slave
fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have
patience with me, and I will pay you every-
thing.' [27]And out of pity for him, the lord
of that slave released him and forgave
him the debt. [28]But that same slave, as
he went out, came upon one of his fellow
slaves who owed him a hundred denarii,
and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay
what you owe.' [29]Then his fellow slave fell
down and pleaded with him, 'Have pa-
tience with me, and I will pay you.' [30]But
he refused; then he went and threw him
into prison until he would pay the debt.
[31]When his fellow slaves saw what had hap-
pened, they were greatly distressed, and
they went and reported to their lord all
that had taken place. [32]Then his lord sum-
moned him and said to him, 'You wicked
slave! I forgave you all that debt because
you pleaded with me. [33]Should you not
have had mercy on your fellow slave, as
I had mercy on you?' [34]And in anger his
lord handed him over to be tortured until
he would pay his entire debt. [35]So my
heavenly Father will also do to every one
of you, if you do not forgive your brother
or sister from your heart."