

7th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Matthew 5:38-48

“I’m only human.” That’s fine, but just remember that the next time someone does something to you. They’re only human, so why get upset? If it’s a good enough excuse for you, it’s a good enough excuse for them. Every time we are at Mass we pray the Lord’s Prayer and we say, “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” If we say it, we should mean it, otherwise we are just, as Christ said, babbling like the pagans do (cf. *Mt.* 6:7).

Five years ago, on 26 September, 2018, a 26 year old man named Botham Jean was murdered by a woman called Amber Guyger. A year later she was convicted of the murder and sentenced to ten years in prison. At the trial was the victim’s brother, Brandt Jean, who was 18 years old. He asked to speak to the woman now convicted of his brother’s murder. He said to her: “If you truly are sorry, I can speak for myself, I forgive, and I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you. And I don’t think anyone can say it—again I’m speaking for myself—but I love you just like anyone else. And I’m not gonna say I hope you rot and die just like my brother did, but I presently want the best for you. And I wasn’t going to ever say this in front of my family or anyone, but I don’t even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you, because I know that’s exactly what Botham would want you to do. And the best would be to give your life to Christ. I’m not going to say anything else. I think giving your life to Christ would be the best thing that Botham would want you to do. Again I love you as a person and I don’t wish anything bad on you.” He then turned to the judge and asked, “I don’t know if this is possible, but can I give her a hug, please? Please?” And he stood up and hugged the woman who had killed his brother, and she hugged him back.

He did not need to show mercy. No one would have expected that he should. He could have been angry and we could say he had every right to be angry. But he chose something else. He chose not to dwell on his own pain but to seek the healing of this woman who had killed his brother so that she would, one day, be free.

Our Lord said, "be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). That eighteen year old boy who forgave the woman that took his brother away from him, showed us how.