

***“Forgiveness”***

1. There is a particular sin that prevents many otherwise good people from growing into saintly people, namely, the sin of being full of anger and having a hard time forgiving those who have hurt them. We see this especially today in far too many families who have dealt with divorce, infidelity, and just overall selfishness and dysfunctionality. In today’s readings, especially from the book of Sirach and the Gospel, we hear of the absolute necessity of forgiveness, in order to be a true follower of Jesus and to have inner peace in this life and salvation in the next. **Remember forgiveness is a divine gift.** To be able to forgive someone, who hurts us badly, esp. if it is a close family member, from the heart, is a grace we cannot achieve on our own. Our natural tendency is to want to take revenge or to at least hold a grudge and bitterness against the individual or individuals who have hurt us. **Is there a person or several people, family or otherwise, that we need to forgive from our hearts, TODAY?** This may be something we have held onto for years, or have buried deep down in our souls, and it is like a festering wound! Be honest. If we are willing to forgive, God will do the rest in terms of healing our hearts, and hopefully bring about a conversion in the people we are forgiving and in us. **Remember the act of forgiving someone is an act of the will and not a feeling and doesn’t depend on the other person’s response.** **If we go on our feelings in this area, we will NEVER forgive anyone.** If we will to forgive someone, hopefully the feelings will follow later; but if they do not, this is an opportunity to give a particularly heavy Cross to Jesus in love for the conversion of all sinners as Our Lady of Fatima asked us to do. **A spiritual tip:** *whenever thoughts or feelings of resentment crop up toward the person who has hurt you deeply, say a prayer for the person as soon as you become conscious of the thoughts, and then move on.* If you do this on a regular basis in your life, not only are you growing in the grace of forgiveness but in the virtue of charity, which is the heart of holiness. Two **indispensable aids in this process are the Sacrament of Confession** as the healing graces contained therein can enable us to forgive ourselves if we have done something seriously evil in the past, and also

forgive the most grievous offenses committed against us by others, and fill us with great inner peace after Confession is completed; and the second is having a **sense of humor** about the foibles of human nature. A recommended book to help one deal with anger in a Catholic and holy way is called *Overcoming Sinful Anger: How to Master Your Emotions and Bring Peace to Your Life* by Fr. Thomas Morrow.

2. Forgiveness not only leads to peace in this life, it along with repentance are the keys to eternal salvation. **Think for a moment of death**, as the book of Sirach reminds us of in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading. At that moment we will have to give to God an account of our love or conversely our hatred which is in our hearts toward our fellow man. **The words contained in the *Our Father*: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” should strike us to the heart.** It is a conditional statement: we are saying, *Heavenly Father only forgive my trespasses (sins) to the extent that I forgive those who trespass (sin) against me.* **Do we realize the implication of that?** If we don’t forgive others, Our Heavenly Father will not forgive us! Remember Heaven is a place of love and forgiveness; hell is a place of hatred and vengeance. **We must overcome any hatred or lack of forgiveness in our hearts or WE RISK LOSING HEAVEN! WE MUST FORGIVE OTHERS FROM OUR HEART!** Also, many souls are in Purgatory for sins of anger, short of hatred, that they didn’t resolve or make reparation for in this earthly life - better to deal with things now. See the great books on Purgatory *Hungry Souls* and *My Conversations with Poor Souls* for more insights on this.
3. **As always Jesus is our role model on how to forgive.** What did He say when He was on the Cross, in the process of being murdered in cold blood? *Father, get them, destroy them? Send them all to hell, NOW?* He could have been reasonably justified on some level in doing that. But, no, what did He say? **“Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!”** WOW. If He forgave His murderers in that circumstance, don’t you think with His help we can forgive others, no matter what they have done to us? He can help us overcome our anger, our hurt, our bitterness, our resentment, our rage. We can entrust our cause to Him. He is both all merciful

and all just. **Remember everything will be balanced out in the end - in His time.** But we must pray for those who have hurt us, for their spiritual conversion, as God doesn't want anyone to end up in Hell and neither should we! We also need to pray for God's forgiveness, and ask for forgiveness from others, for the times we have hurt others in a serious way. Remember this dynamic of forgiveness is a two-way street: none of us are innocent - we have all hurt others too. We need both to give and to ask for forgiveness, regularly, in humility of heart, if we want to be part of God's Kingdom. As we celebrate this Holy Mass, in which Jesus makes present His supreme act of Reconciliation and Forgiveness: ***The Sacrifice of His Life on Mount Calvary for Our Sins***, let us ask the Lord to fill each one of us with a deeper spirit of repentance and forgiveness, and not to put human limits on that forgiveness. In this way we will enter more deeply into Jesus's total self-giving love more profoundly each day, which is the only path to Heaven! God bless you.