



Forgiveness

In communion with the universal Church, we have just experienced the liturgical highpoint of Easter. We followed Jesus through his Passion, handed over to hatred, carrying the burden of men's sins. His last words were a petition addressed to his Father, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (Lk 23:24) From the depths of suffering, Jesus in this statement expresses the heart of his mission: the salvation of the world through the remission of sins. Throughout his public life, he ceaselessly proclaimed the Father's mercy in his words and actions, "*(...) I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.*" (Mk 2:17)

But the salvation that is offered can only be received in a heart that makes itself available. Thus forgiveness, up to seventy times seven times, and beyond the love even of enemies, is the ultimate criteria of Christian charity. If we have to rely on our own human forces, this demand can seem to be insurmountable. Yet forgiveness received, given, to oneself and to others is the only possible way for a free life and for family happiness as Pope Francis reminds us.

Married life is THE place par excellence where forgiveness must be practised. Forgiveness is not only an asceticism, a condition of lasting love, it is also a way for growth and renewal. Father Henri Caffarel did not hesitate in calling the married couple a *community of penitents*.

But what happens with the affront suffered is "unforgivable"? Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits opens for us a possible way forward below. God comes to the aid of our weakness and enables the broken link to be re-established, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10)

This is where our service of intercession fulfils its complete dimension, by praying for all the human wounds, our prayer connects with that of Christ dead and resurrected for the salvation of the world.

Elisabeth & Bernard Gérard

SPIRITUAL LETTER

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins

Easter! Everything is new! The old world has gone, darkness has retired before the light, the world has changed its direction: Christ is risen and leads us into his life. Our whole existence is based on this reality enshrined in the deepest parts of ourselves. Our balance is to be found there.

We will need eternity to attain such a gift of God for us, the gift of his love. On this earth, we have a "foretaste" of this reality. Our "evil tendencies," as the liturgy calls them, still seem to be well anchored in our lives! So, does the Lord's resurrection free us? Yes. Most certainly yes. Why? It is one thing to be enclosed in our sin, burdened by sadness, without the hope of ever getting out. It is another to see that we are not reduced to being that sombre part of ourselves: God looks at us in the light. When he sees us, he sees his children!

Mary, Mary Madeleine, Mary the sinner... who was forgiven for so much because she loved so much, Mary is no longer the same! Yet her past, her sin is certainly rejected but the memory is there and this memory can be painful. But no! What she remembers is Jesus' forgiveness, it is the memory of the look of a man who respected her, a man, the Son of God: so a true love was born in her that transformed everything, that let life spring forth. We understand that she became the first to see the Risen Christ and that she was the first

to announce to the apostles that Jesus is alive! Mary, witness of God's mercy, Mary, apostle of the apostles, Mary sees her past become life-giving! (Gospel of the Tuesday of Easter, John 20:11-18)

We have been resurrected! Many shadows remain. But the power of the resurrection is stronger, deeper, more essential than any other orientation that, in us, wants to unbalance us. Therefore we personally experience the strength of the resurrection, the power of the grace of our baptism. *"For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."* (Gal 3:27) We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

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THE JOY OF LOVE

Amoris Laetitia, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis

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Forgiveness (Excerpts)

Love forgives

105. Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment. The phrase *ou logízetai to kakón* means that love "takes no account of evil"; "it is not resentful". The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people's weaknesses and to excuse them. As Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34).

106. When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. The truth is that "family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life".

107. Today we recognize that being able to forgive others implies the liberating experience of understanding and forgiving ourselves. Often our mistakes, or criticism we have received from loved ones, can lead to a loss of self-esteem. (...) We need to learn to pray over our past history, to accept ourselves, to learn how to live with our limitations, and even to forgive ourselves, in order to have this same attitude towards others.

108. All this assumes that we ourselves have had the experience of being forgiven by God, justified by his grace and not by our own merits. We have known a love that is prior to any of our own efforts, a love that constantly opens doors, promotes and encourages. If we accept that God's love is unconditional, that the Father's love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, our family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but rather one of constant tension and mutual criticism.

Henri Caffarel, L'Anneau d'Or

MARRIAGE, A PATH TO GOD

Special Issue 117-118, May-August 1964

Conjugal Reconciliation (Excerpts)

But let us leave to one side those who are in favour of this, those who have retired from love. And let us return to the couple, where the fight is on between love and non-love. It is important to consider how, when non-love momentarily separates them, the spouses can return to dialogue, re-establish the communication of love. In a word, let us ask ourselves what conjugal reconciliation is made up of, what procedure it follows.

Not sharing in evil, in non-love, this is the bottom line, and it emerges from what I said. This leads to recognising your mistake before your spouse, to overturning your judgement, to condemning yourself. (I am not talking about the mistakes he does not know about and that often, it is best not to reveal—but that is a

whole other problem). The request for forgiveness is the logical consequence of this recognition. What extraordinary proof of love in this process of humility! The first aspiration to be given in order to compensate the shortfall of love that we recognise ourselves to be guilty of. Obviously, the offended person would have to be open, friendly. But if they know how to forgive with this kind of forgiveness, the only true one that consists in giving their total confidence, they will have an admirable and unexpected experience. The very same one as the prophet Hosea experienced when God asked to take back his unfaithful wife. *“My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger... Therefore I am now going to allure her (the Jewish nation); I will lead her into the wilderness and speak tenderly to her. (...) There she will respond as in the days of her youth.”* (Hos 2:14-15)

Knowing how to forgive is a science that is very necessary for married people! The Pope who ended his toast at the end of a wedding feast, knew this all too well. *“There is one grace above all that I wish for you and that my prayer appeals to God for and that is that throughout your life together you may know how to forgive each other.”* The single people in attendance appeared to be very surprised, the older couples a lot less so...

Not going to sleep without forgiving and making up, certain young couples take on this resolution and jealously keep it. They sense that the future of their love depends on it. I remember one of these couples. One night, for the first time after three years of marriage, the wife refused the kiss of peace. Without saying a word, the husband, from Lorraine, knelt at the foot of the bed and began reciting the Rosary, convinced that this was a critical moment in their life. Since she knew that he was capable of spending the whole night praying like this, his wife did not let him go beyond the third decade!

Forgiving... Up to what point?

Paul-Dominique Marcovits

Collection Épiphanie, Edition du CERF, January 2013

Forgiving in Silence (excerpts)

Forgiving in silence. What is that about? Giving forgiveness to God. This forgiveness that I cannot say to the other person, this forgiveness that still moves my sensitivity, my fragility, this potential forgiveness, or even this total forgiveness that I have within my heart... give it to God, place it in his hands. God, he will see to it that it is passed on to the person who offended us. Forgiving in silence does not mean getting rid of the other person or of the problem: ‘I am turning the page, there is nothing more to be done.’ It means handing over the other person and everything that is still difficult between us to the hands of God. There lies the great act of faith, this faith that I have told you is the source of forgiveness. God knows what is necessary to be done for the other person and he will do it. Yes, God will know how to enlighten the spouse that has been so tough, the boss who did not respect us, he will know how to reach their hearts. God knows us, each one of us, to our depths and he sees as us tied together by the power of his forgiveness. In the darkness, God makes the forgiveness that we entrusted into his hands bear fruit.

The Lord is Tenderness and Mercy

(Excerpts from Psalm 103)

Praise the Lord, my soul, (...)

Who forgives all your sins,

Who heals all your diseases,

Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with love and compassion,

Who satisfies desires with good things,

So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

A Prayer to Learn to Forgive and to Ask for Forgiveness

Lord Jesus, with this prayer I surrender myself to you.
I trust in your Word and open my whole heart up to you.
Recognising my sins, I implore your forgiveness for each one of them.
Here is my life, from the day I was born until today.
My mistakes, failures, anxiety, suffering and my total ignorance of your Word are to be found within me.
Lord Jesus, son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner!
Come to my aid! Forgive my sins that are known and those that are hidden.
Deliver me from all vice and all evil.
In your presence, I want to forgive everyone who has offended, hurt or harmed me.
Just as I ask you to forgive my sins, counting on your grace, I grant them my forgiveness and entrust them to you, calling on your infinite compassion for each one of us.
And now Jesus, come to me, I receive you as master and Lord.
Come and live within me, give me the grace to experience your Word intensely in all circumstances, day after day. Inundate me with your Spirit.
Come and live within me, Jesus and prevent me from distancing myself from you.
With all my heart I profess the faith of my baptism, certain that the Grace granted by God in your person, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will bring me healing, support and will guide me in this new stage that I begin today at your side.
Amen.

Maísa Castro, and her husband Régis, has belonged to the Catholic Charismatic Revival movement in Brazil since 1977. The couple wrote a Catholic prayer book, *Rosary of Liberation* and together with the Jesuit Father Eduardo Dougherty, they founded a Catholic community in 1984, *Associação Senhor Jesus* (Association of the Lord Jesus).

GENERAL INTENTION – FATIMA 2018

The XIIth International Gathering of Teams of Our Lady will take place in Fatima, July 16th-21st, 2018.

Lord, we pray to you that Fatima 2018, just as Father Henri Caffarel wished from the very first International Gathering in 1954, *renews the gift of oneself, the ardent and deliberate wish of putting Teams of Our Lady members into the service of the Church:*

- *to make our children its children;*
- *to offer up with eagerness those that God will call for the “highest service;”*
- *to work with all our strength to pass on what we have understood of marriage to so many couples who are unaware of it or who await it;*
- *to collaborate in its missionary task, starting with our parishes.*