



The only solution is love.

Winona Catholic Worker

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Forgive Us Our Trespasses As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us

During the winter, as ICE's presence in our state intensified, Catholic Worker friends from around the country reached out to us. While there was some ICE activity in our town, the vast majority of it took place two hours north of us, in the Twin Cities. Many of our volunteers participated in protests or supported efforts to help folks who were most impacted. Through it all I wondered how we might address the topic in our next newsletter. Finally, on Divine Mercy Sunday, I called my friend Nathan and reluctantly asked, "Should we write something about forgiveness?"

There was a pause.

"I don't know," Nathan finally replied. "The world is so crazy in so many ways right now. I don't know if people want to hear about forgiveness."

I took that to mean it's exactly the thing to talk about. We're not talking about denying wrongdoing, condoning wrongdoing, or even accepting wrongdoing. We're talking about forgiving wrongdoing. And not just once, but 70 x 7 times. Countless forgiveness x countless forgiveness. (Maybe because God knows it takes that much practice!)

To be capable of such forgiveness we must gaze regularly at Jesus' wounds and, difficult as it may be, recognize in them the wounds that we have inflicted upon others. But there's more! As we recognize our own sin, we do not hide in shame – no, that would be too easy – we admit them, we confess them, we ask forgiveness for them, and then, through reconciliation, we heal from them. We have the courage to do so because in gazing regularly at Jesus's wounds we also see the wounds that have been inflicted upon us, the ones we have forgiven. This is the forgiveness loop. Countless forgiveness x countless forgiveness.

Like radical hospitality, radical forgiveness requires an emptying of ourselves, but in that emptying, we are filled with the compassion, peace, and light of Christ, and this is the most powerful form of resistance there is.

-Melissa Gordon

A Light in Darkness

In Matthew 6:14-15, Jesus says to his disciples, "If you forgive the faults of others, your Heavenly Father will forgive you yours. If you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive you."

As a Christian in the world as it is today, this call to forgive is troubling. With immigrants being targeted, demonized, and separated from society; governments funding weapons of war used to kill children and citizens; and sex trafficking connected to major influential figures in society, forgiveness can be far from what one wants to do. And even when we're inclined to forgive, knowing how to forgive can be difficult. Nevertheless, scripture makes clear that we are expected to forgive, and offers us some guidance on how to do it.

Luke 17:3-4 says, "Be on your guard. If your brother does wrong, correct him. If he sins against you seven times a day, and seven times a day turns back to you saying, 'I am sorry,' forgive him." This makes a clear statement that forgiveness should definitely be given when an apology has been made. No matter how hurt we have been, or how many times we have been hurt, if the perpetrator is sorry, we are to forgive him.

Conversely, when we have done wrong, we must repent, stop doing wrong, and try to make things right. In Isaiah, The Book of Judgement, Isaiah has a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem in which the Lord speaks to him:

When you spread out your hands, I close mine to you; though you pray more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan's plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right, says the Lord: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; though they be crimson red, they may become white as snow (Isaiah 1:15-18).

This reading gives us an understanding that in order for forgiveness to take place, justice needs to be in action for those who are being wronged.

There needs to be an attempt to redeem oneself from misdeeds through good acts, and then forgiveness may be given by the Lord.

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If confessing to, apologizing, and turning from wrong acts has not happened, it could be because the wrongdoer has not learned the ways of God. People need to be educated about what is good in the sight of God so they can be redeemed. Jesus concludes his teaching about the Beatitudes by saying:

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Men do not light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. They set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, your light must shine before men so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:14-16).

This passage reminds us that it is our role as Christians to be the light by teaching how to be good. It is our responsibility to be an example to others as to what is right and just. This extends beyond those we love and care for to all our brothers and sisters. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies, and to teach them what is expected in order to be forgiven and for relationships to be restored.

While forgiveness is certainly easier when justice has been served or the person in darkness suddenly sees the light, there is a fundamental lesson that Christians cannot ignore. During the crucifixion, Jesus proclaimed, “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This is what is referred to as Divine Mercy. It calls for the forgiveness of those who are seen as unworthy or blind of their own actions. God wants to have a good relationship with humanity; therefore, God constantly and repeatedly forgives humanity. It is a gift from God, which God expects us to share with each other. Divine Mercy must be given to those blind of their own misdeeds and to those deemed unworthy. *When the unworthy and spiritually blind are forgiven, they may learn to be a light.*

To make forgiveness easier, an apology helps. Setting things right through good works can help with reconciling damaged relationships with each other and with God. If we practice these teachings, and help others practice them as well, we can be a light in a world too often filled with darkness.

-Nathan Rislove

What the numbers don't say.
The finances of the Winona Catholic Worker.

Finances are little talked about at the Catholic Worker. There are a number of reasons for this.

One reason is the recognition that money is the root of all kinds of evil. Money is incidental to what happens at the Worker. We give away the daily bread as we are given it. Last winter a woman who was without shelter told us she had no coat and could find no free one that would fit her. We bought her a coat, not a thin one but one of good quality. We gave gas money to a friend of the Worker who offered a ride to a man who needed to get to Rochester. There is no formula or forms for this. It is done instead in relationship and out of the spirit of personalism articulated by Peter Maurin.

Another reason money is scarcely mentioned is because there are no paid staff at the Worker. Cooks and hosts and everyone who works behind the scene (including putting out this newsletter) does so out of the generosity of their hearts. This makes it many times less costly to do what is done and keeps the Worker free from entering into the wage system and all that would entail. The only people paid at the Worker are those who are in need of cash work and whose other employment possibilities are limited.

Yet another reason the financial situation goes unmentioned is that it is stable. This spring when the water heater went out we had the finances to replace it. Hot water is a gift given to our guests in the form of showers and laundry, both of which are heavily used. This summer we are able to have the rotten siding on the Bethany house replaced. The old dilapidated steps to the back door (the main entrance for the volunteers) have been replaced this spring with concrete steps along with a new sidewalk going up to them.

This is all possible because of the generosity of the Friends of the Catholic Worker and the grace of God.

Thank you and thank God.
Joseph

Who We Are

We are a Christian faith community dedicated to the works of mercy and living the beatitudes of the sermon on the mount. In the tradition of the Catholic Worker movement and with contributions of money, food, labor, and prayers, we seek to serve our brothers and sisters in need and to deepen our relationship with God and our community.

Join Us!

We invite you to join us in whatever way you can! We're open the following hours:

Monday - Wednesday, 8-11am

Thursday, 4-7pm (supper served at 5pm)

Saturday, 12-3pm

Contact Us

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