



ordinary
time



lectionary
reading

Cycle C

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

Lectionary #162

Reading I: 2 Samuel 5:1-3

This segment of Second Samuel recounts the selection of David by the tribes of Israel to be their king. Although this particular story about David does not indicate his need for **forgiveness**, the need for King David to seek God's **forgiveness** for his sinfulness will occur. Persons and institutions of power may indeed fall into sin through their arrogance. King David found himself in need of God's **forgiveness** as does every human being. With a contrite heart the loving **forgiveness** of our God is always available.

Reading 2: Colossians 1: 12-20

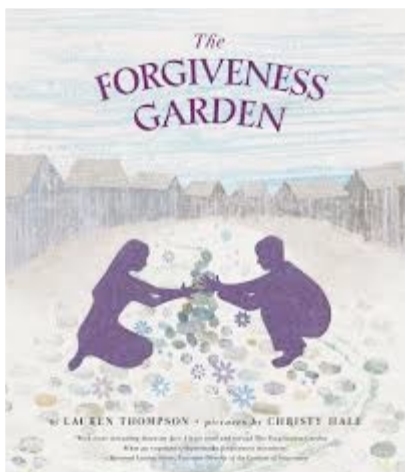
Saint Paul writes beautifully to the Colossians expressing the deep love that the Lord Jesus Christ extends to us. He speaks of how Jesus, through his love and sacrifice, delivered us from darkness to the kingdom of light. The blood of Christ offered on the cross has given us this freedom and allowed us to live with a peace beyond anything the world can offer. **Forgiveness** is one the key elements of the preaching of both Jesus and of Saint Paul.

Gospel: Luke 23: 35-43

Calvary is the scene for today's gospel selection and the theme is **forgiveness**. Most specifically, the words of **forgiveness** are spoken to one of the criminals that is crucified alongside Jesus. You will notice that the criminal asks for **forgiveness** and does not presume it. He asks: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus' reply is: "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." We can see from this very short passage that to be forgiven we must seek **forgiveness** with an integrity of heart and never presume **forgiveness**, even though we have an "all loving God". If we offend someone that we know loves us, we are called to ask for **forgiveness** and not simply presume that because of their love we are forgiven of our offense.



children's story



The Forgiveness Garden

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Illustrated by Christy Hale

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character
education
activity

Forgiveness is a process that takes time and prayer. The first step to forgiveness is to pray that God will open your heart to beginning the process.

The Forgiveness Garden

Two fictional warring villages, Vayam and Gamte, sit across the stream from each other. When a Gamte boy named Karune throws a rock and injures a Vayam girl, revenge is expected. But the girl, Sama, forgives her attacker and uses the rocks to begin building a garden the two communities can share. This allegorical tale, inspired by a real Garden of **Forgiveness** in Lebanon provides an opportunity to see that the **forgiveness** process must start somewhere; someone must make the first move.

If there is someone in your life that has hurt you by their words or actions, an opportunity to either respond with revenge or to begin the “process” of **forgiveness** is placed before you. The first part of the process is to ask the Lord to open your heart to begin the process and then to soften your heart for the beginning of healing to occur.

Throughout the Scriptures we often hear of the necessity to forgive rather than to hold a grudge against our enemies. Jesus, in fact said, “love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” This is not something easily done on our own so the beginning of the **forgiveness** process is to pray for an openness to forgive. Jesus, throughout his life, and as we see in today’s scripture passage from Luke, speaks words of **forgiveness** to the repentant thief on the cross. Jesus models how essential **forgiveness** is to living the Christian life even as he is dying on the cross.

Going on a “Heart Search”

Step One: Explain to the students that they will be entering into what is known as a “heart search.” The purpose is to pray to God to help remove any grudges one might have and thus begin the **forgiveness** process.

Step Two: The following fill in the blank prayer would be used to do this:

Dear God, I am having a hard time forgiving ____ for _____. Please enter my heart so that I can forgive as You have forgiven me. Amen.

Dear God, I really feel like hurting _____ rather than forgiving _____. Please help me to remember that as Your follower I am to forgive and not hold onto past hurts. Amen.

Dear God, asking for **forgiveness** from _____ is scary. Please send me Your spirit so that I may have the courage I need to do as You would have me do. Amen.

Often people think that to forgive means to forget. Human beings do not have the capacity to forgive and forget. Better we should forgive and remember that God has forgiven us!



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

Make a list of past hurts or people that you believe have hurt you and place them in a special prayer box or container. Each day read their names and remember them in your prayers. Go one step further and pray for their greater good. Remember that **forgiveness** is a process so be patient with yourself as you do this each day.

Look Feel Know Act

Forgiveness and love are the ongoing themes of the gospels. They are spoken of often, most probably because Jesus recognized that as human beings, we need to be reminded often that **forgiveness** and love are essentials to following Him. The challenge of loving and forgiving is placed before us daily.

It is not surprising that the readings for this last Sunday of the liturgical year would place an emphasis on **forgiveness**, for it is a foreshadowing of the end time. Thus, we must be prepared to understand the full meaning of the phrase from The Lord's Prayer...*and forgives us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. The meaning here is that we can expect the same degree of **forgiveness** from God as we have been willing to extend to others. God understands that **forgiveness** is a process and the fact that we are willing to enter into the process rather than hold a grudge is the beginning of the process that can only continue with God's grace.

Knowing that **forgiveness** is a process gives us hope that we can achieve **forgiveness** as a way of life. Make a commitment to yourself to place special emphasis on the segment of the The Lord's Prayer that seeks **forgiveness** and a willingness to forgive others. As in anything, practice makes perfect and would there be anything better to be perfect at than being loving and forgiving?



closing
tool

In *The Forgiveness Garden* we encounter a first step to the process of **forgiveness**. When Sama uses the rock that was used to harm her to begin the construction of a garden, she transformed the rock into a symbol of **forgiveness**. That is the wonderful thing about love and **forgiveness**, something hateful can be transformed. We can see this in our own Catholic tradition. The cross was once a symbol of absolute terror. Though the love of Jesus, the cross has become a sign and symbol of love that brings a sense of comfort. Think of the number of people that take comfort in wearing a cross around their neck.

Pray that you will always seek to be an element of forgiveness in whatever group you belong. You may wish to take the phrase of forgiveness from The Lord's Prayer and make it a mantra prayer, saying over and over again "Forgive me Lord as I am willing to forgive others."



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