

**Holy Father, we thank you for the opportunity to know that you are our Lord and without you we are nothing. Teach us and grant us courage to forgive others as you have forgiven us. Strengthen our faith in you so we can see you in everyone we meet in Jesus Christ Name we pray. Amen**

**In our gospel reading for today Jesus told the parable of the unforgiving servant.**

**The gospel of Matthew as we know it is filled with Jesus Christ's teaching about forgiveness.**

**We talked about forgiveness in the church all the time.**

**Forgiveness is in our Lord's Prayer "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"**

**Wow ..... We ask for God's forgiveness during confession. Our believe is that we receive forgiveness assurance after confession.**

**Let us take a step back and think about forgiveness. What does it mean to us and how important is it to us and our faith? (Twice)**

**Forgiveness is easier said than done.**

Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.

Merriam Webster defined forgiveness as: to cease to feel resentment against (an offender); to give up resentment of or claim to requital; *forgive* a debt.

However, forgiveness is for our own growth and well-being. When we hold on to hurt, pain, resentment and anger it harms us far more than it harms the offender.

Forgiveness frees us to live in the present.

Forgiveness can also be defined as an act of pardoning another person.

In Greek the word “forgiveness” literally means “let it go”

Do we find it easy to forgive or hard to forgive? I am the first one to tell you that it is not easy, it is a process, and sometimes it takes time and through prayers to God.

In our gospel reading for today, Peter asked Jesus a leading question about forgiveness: how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, up to seven times?

**After reading this passage, the question I have is that why did Peter asked Jesus this question? Was he having an argument with one of the disciples? Or just another Peter's curiosity seeking to understand his responsibility about forgiveness.**

**Now with the leading question Peter asked up to seven times to Jesus thinking he was been very nice and generous. To Peter's astonishment Jesus responded and telling him seventy times seven times.**

**Our Lord showing us through this passage and explaining His abundance of love for us all. His forgiveness of our sins is unlimited.**

**Jesus then told the parable and compared it to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one servant was brought to him who owed 10,000 talents.**

**This is a huge debt as described by Jesus at that time. This is a debt the servant will not be able to pay in his life time.**

**Now, how much debt do we owe our Gracious Lord for His Mercy over us? Can any of us count the number of our sins?**

**The king ordered the servant to be sold, including his wife and children, so he can get his money back. The servant begged for mercy. And out of pity the king released him and forgave him his debt.**

**The same servant went out and found one of His fellow servant that owed him 100 denarii and seized him by the throat and began to choke him, saying pay what you owe.**

**His fellow servant went and reported him to the king and the king chastised the servant “you wicked servant, I forgave you all the debt, because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you. In anger the king delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all his debt.**

**Brothers and sisters, do we forgive others as we say during our Lord’s prayers?**

**A saint was asked, what is anger? He gave a profoundly answer “it is a punishment we give to ourselves for somebody else mistake.**

**In 2005, Mr. Jameel McGee of Benton Harbor, Michigan was down the block from his house when a police officer accused him and arrested him of dealing drugs.**

**Mr. McGee narrated his ordeal with CBS news that it was all made up. Of course a lot of accused men make that claim, but not many arresting officers will agree with this statement.**

**“I falsified the report” former Benton Harbor police officer Andrew Collins admitted. Basically, he wanted to impress his bosses, so he had a drug bust and put an innocent man in jail.**

**Eventually, the crooked cop was caught and he served a year and half in prison for falsifying reports, planting drugs on innocent people and stealing from the dept. Mr. McGee was exonerated, but he still spent four years in prison for the crime he did not commit.**

**Both men are now back in Bento Harbor which is a small town.**

**Mr. McGee has made a promised to himself that upon his release from prison that he is going to find former police officer Andrew Collins and do something bad to him, because he has caused him to miss some of his son's growing up.**

**By coincidence both men ended up at a faith based employment agency Mosaic where they work side by side in the same cafeteria. And it was in those cramped quarters that the bad cop and the wrongfully accused had no choice but to have it out. Imagine what kinds of instruments are available for someone to use against another person in a commercial kitchen.**

**Mr. Andrew Collins reached out to Mr. Jameel McGee and said I am sorry. Mr. McGee unexpectedly accepted his apology and told him that he forgave him. They became friends. As their friendship grew Mr. McGee told Mr. Collins that he loved him like a brother. Mr. Collins broke down and cried.**

**Both men now go around the country talking about racial reconciliation and forgiveness. Mr. McGee the wrongly accused is a black man and Mr. Collins is a white man.**

**What an act of forgiveness.**

**Also on May 13, 1981 Pope John Paul was crossing St Peter's Square in Vatican City when an attempt was made on his life.**

**Mehmet Ali Agca who has escaped from Turkish prison after receiving a life sentence for murdering a journalist fired four shots with a 9 millimeter pistol. Two struck the pope in his lower intestine,**

one in his right arm and one in his left index finger. Two bystanders were also wounded.

Despite severe blood loss the Pope survived and asked all Catholics to pray for Agca. He was sentenced to prison.

In 1983, Pope John Paul II visited the would be assassin in prison. They became friends and the Pope stayed in touch with him and his family during his incarceration. In 2000 the Pope requested for Agca to be pardon and the request was granted. Agca converted to Christianity while in Prison. In 2014 Agca returned to Italy and placed two dozen of white roses at the tomb of Pope John Paul.

With these two illustrations, I am not implying that forgiveness is easy and some of us still struggle with it, but it is the only way forward for our inner peace.

The inability to forgive each other often put strain and big dent to relationships.

Forgiveness of others brings us peace. It releases us from carrying anger and resentment around. Forgiveness is a hard working process, but as Christians we must forgive others and let it go, because tomorrow is not promised to anyone.

Therefore, are you ready to forgive those people that has hurt your feelings or let you down?

Forgiving someone does not mean we are weak or we are pretending or denying that the behavior never happened.

**Forgiveness is not that we are excusing the inappropriate behavior of individuals or approving their acts.**

**Forgiveness does not mean we are condoning any abuse or allowing someone to take advantage of us or overlook the criminal act of individuals.**

**Today, we stand at a very difficult intersection of racial injustice, mistreatment of others that look different from us and couple with reports of some police brutality, oppression of the weak, abuse of power and economic oppression.**

**As Christians we have to remember that any mistreatment or abuse of any group of people is an assault on the image of God.**

**We all have the moral choice and responsibility to defend the image of God by speaking up and correcting the wrong doing as we see it.**

**We are now at a crossroad when we cannot afford to be silent anymore to the extra ordinary injustice we see all around us and the willful, intentional and deliberate act of violation of the rights of our fellow citizens.**

**Our silence then becomes an affirmation of the status quo and evidence of losing connection with our Lord Jesus Christ teaching.**

**Who is our neighbor? As Christians we must fiercely defend our neighbors especially those who are different from us.**

**Recently, the behavior and action taking by some of our leaders has led to some citizens seeking for revenge.**

**We must let go of the thoughts and fantasies of revenge. We must try to see and love as God sees and love.**

**Forgiveness is a choice and is a process and it is through the Grace of God that we are able to let whatever that was done to us go.**

**Brothers and sisters, I urge you and encourage you not to leave a life that is full of anger and resentment. We cannot allow ourselves to be imprisoned by hatred.**

**Psalm 130:3-4**

**“If you O Lord kept a record of sins, O Lord who can stand, But with you there is forgiveness”.**

**I encouraged us to be instrument of God’s Grace towards people who has let us down. We need to be an instrument of the peace of Christ who taught us to pray to forgive others as he has forgiven us.**

**May Almighty Father Grant us courage to forgive others and Give us His Peace. Amen**