

## Forgive Us Our Sins, As We Forgive Those Who Sin Against Us

Growing up in a Catholic household in the '60s and '70s, prayer and church were major parts of lives. We went to church every Sunday and we prayed together as a family. Of course, these prayers were drilled into us at home and at school as I spent grades 1-12 in Catholic school. We learned the "basics" or the "Our Father", "Hail, Mary", and "Glory Be." These were and are the standards that I could recite in my sleep, much how our older members gathered here can recite Psalm 23, King James Version.

This morning, I would like to turn our attention to the Our Father or Lord's Prayer, whatever you have called it throughout your life. Because it is our basic prayer that comes to us from Jesus, it is something we hold dear to our hearts. We acknowledge God, recognize where God is, and that God's name is holy. We pray for the coming of the kingdom/reign and we pray that God's will be done here on earth. We assume that is already done so in heaven.

We then ask to be fed. I interpret this as being fed both physically as well as spiritually. After that, we ask to be forgiven of our sins, or

debts, or trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. It is this concept of forgiveness that is prevalent in our readings this morning.

In the reading from Genesis, Joseph finally confronts his brothers. Now, we have to remember the story of what happened. Joseph is the son of Jacob, who had twelve sons (of course they only mentioned one daughter later.) Joseph's mother was Rachel, who was Jacob's "favorite wife." We'll get into that one on another day. However, Joseph's eleven brothers had enough of the special treatment by their father of Joseph and had originally plotted to kill him. Eventually, they sold him into slavery to traveling Ishmaelites who, in turn sold him to a man named Potiphar. Through a series of unfortunate events, mostly involving someone we only know as "Mrs. Potiphar", Joseph finds himself imprisoned. He is released only when he can interpret Pharaoh's dream and, thus, is named second in command to see Egypt through the predicted and realized times of plenty and then famine.

It was the famine that brought the brothers to Joseph. The quick version of the story is that the brothers didn't recognize Joseph but Joseph certainly recognized his brothers. He reveals himself and offers

forgiveness to his brothers. In the midst of family turmoil and strife, can you imagine forgiving your siblings for selling you into slavery? As difficult as this may seem, it is exactly what Jesus teaches his disciples and us this morning in the Gospel lesson.

Today's Gospel is broken into three different sections or units. The first part tells us that "Kingdom people do not reciprocate. Those in this section could be looked upon as victims. However, we are called to take charge of our lives and offer forgiveness and to be loving, caring, and giving, as well FORgiving.

The second section repeats the admonition of no reciprocation but to those who love us. It is easy to forgive those who love us, etc. God does not REact but acts out of love. God does not love us just because we love God. The third section reminds us that Children of God are called to give and forgive. Jesus teaches us that God is full of grace and the final work of grace is to make us gracious. We are called to follow God's example to forgive—even to forgive those who don't love us, don't seek forgiveness, or probably wouldn't forgive us.

It is my hope that we can meditate and pray on forgiveness this week. It is important to not only forgive others but to recognize that we are also forgiven. We tend to be toughest on ourselves. Please remember to forgive yourselves; if God can forgive us, then certainly we can feel that forgiveness and forgive ourselves.

As we pray this week, take some time pray the Lord's prayer. Let's pray it again and listen to where we are asked to be forgiven, those who have sinned against us to be forgiven, to be accept our own forgiveness, and to bask in the unconditional love offered to us by God to whom belongs the kingdom, power, and glory. Our Father...