

REFLECTION FOR TUESDAY, 3rd WEEK OF LENT.

Dan 3:25, 34-43 Matthew 18:21-35

FORGIVENESS

Today's readings deal with a subject which concerns us all – forgiveness.

None of us can go through life without getting hurt. Hurt is not easy to deal with. If it is entertained, it produces a legacy of bitterness, resentment, and anger. It poisons our heart and destroys our capacity to love.

Unforgiveness has destroyed families. Unforgiveness has destroyed beautiful marriages and relationships.

It is not a question of forgiving if and when the offender repents - that would be relatively easy. We are expected to forgive even if the offender doesn't repent. This is what makes it so difficult, and why we need God's grace.

Peter's question is our question too: "How often should I forgive?" Jesus asks us to forgive 70x7 - this is what makes it so difficult, and without the grace of God, it is sometimes impossible.

Forgiveness is never easy. Forgiveness implies an understanding of our own poverty, brokenness, and sin, and therefore our own need of forgiveness. This enables us to forgive with understanding and humility.

The only obstacle we can put in the way of God's forgiveness of our sins is our inability to forgive the sins of others. We all need forgiveness. Forgiveness clears a path for God to forgive us. People who cannot forgive break down the bridge over which they themselves must pass.

We need to pray for the gift of forgiveness. Unless we forgive, we will not be able to let go of bitterness and resentment, and so will not know peace or healing. Forgiveness is one of the highest and most beautiful forms of love. Forgiveness is a holy task. Only God can help us to accomplish it fully.

We all know how hard it can be to forgive. At the same time, we know how lovely it is to be forgiven.

When we forgive, we free ourselves of the burden of bitterness and we free the other person of the burden of guilt. It is not good enough to forgive in word. We must forgive from the heart, which means it must be true, sincere, and warm.

Forgiveness should start now. Putting it off only deepens the wound, prolongs bitterness, and postpone happiness. Life is short. Today is the day to forgive.

There is no limit to God's forgiveness for us; therefore, there can be no limit to our forgiveness for one another. God's door of mercy and forgiveness is always open for us sinners to go in – and if we go in, what we will experience is not judgement or condemnation, but God's extravagant mercy, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

You are blessed when you receive mercy and forgiveness from God. You are blessed when you show mercy and forgiveness to others.

Fr Patrick