

## Faith in 5 – Adults Forgiveness



1. Forgiveness is a love that loves to the end (CCC, 2843). The Catechism of the Catholic Church 734 states, "...the first effect of the gift of [God's] love is the forgiveness of our sins". Without a God who is forgiving, we would be without the hope of eternal life.
2. Jesus insists that we be "merciful like our Father in heaven is merciful." We express this truth every time we pray the Our Father: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." If we do not forgive, God cannot forgive us. "...[H]e breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven"." (John 20:22-23)
3. **The Old Testament** speaks of God's incredible forgiveness; of our sins which God casts out of His sight and mind.
  - a. "But in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction for **you have cast all my sins behind your back**". (Isaiah 38:17)
  - b. "And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. **For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more**". (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:6-13)
  - c. "He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. **You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea**". (Micah 7:19)
  - d. "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and **I will not remember your sins**". (Isaiah 43:25)
4. **The New Testament** describes the forgiveness of God through several stories. The most famous passage on forgiveness is a story that Jesus told to illustrate the hard hearts of the Jewish people in Luke 15, the story of **The Prodigal Son**. No matter how far we have strayed, God – full of love -is overcome with joy when we return to Him.



- a. **God is anxious to forgive us.** "But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran..." (Luke 15: 20)
- b. **God's forgiveness is immediate.**  
"...and embraced him and kissed him" (Luke 15:20)
- c. **God celebrates** – "But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." (Luke 15:21).

**The story of The Adulterous Woman** also depicts the character of God's love and forgiveness in John 8:

- d. **God does not condemn us** (John 8:10) "Neither do I condemn you".
- e. **God does not want us to sin again** "Go, and from now on, sin no more" (John 8:11).





**Finally, the story of The Thief on the Cross demonstrates:**

- f. **God forgives completely when we repent.** (Luke 23:43)
- g. **Only God forgives** (CCC 1441). He accepts our repentance and gives us the promise of being with Him in paradise.

- 5. Forgiveness is so important that Jesus, in his first post-resurrection appearance, gave authority to his disciples to exercise forgiveness in His Name (John 20:21-23): "As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained". Forgiveness is grounded in God's love and mercy.

In the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is the formal rite of penance. All mortal sins must be confessed, while confession of venial sins also is recommended but not required. The priest may emphasize repentance, offer counsel and proposes a penance which the penitent accepts. The priest imparts absolution to the penitent of their sins if the penitent verbally expresses true sorrow and firm resolve for conversion.

- 6. Jesus demands that we offer the most loving thing when we have been hurt - forgiveness. Forgiveness is not just for the other person; it is for us. When we forgive others, we experience the peace of a calm heart and the knowledge that we are aligned with God's Will. **How do we cultivate a forgiving nature in our own lives?**
  - a. **Forgiveness is remembering that you have been forgiven.** As the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also forgive. (Colossians 3: 13)
  - b. **Forgiveness means letting go of the offense and not to take revenge.** "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord!" (Romans 12:19). **Do not dwell on the past hurts** (Isaiah 43:18).
  - c. **Forgive even the unforgivable; do not withhold forgiveness but seek justice.** "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive them." (Luke 17:3-4)
  - d. **Do not celebrate your enemy's failures** (Proverbs 24:17) **or speak poorly of them** (Romans 12:14). **Treat them the way you want to be treated** (Luke 6:31).
  - e. **Respond to evil by doing good. Pray for those who hurt you.** "Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you". (Luke 6:27-28)
  - f. **Forgive always.** "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times? I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times". (Matthew 18:21-22)

Know, then, that the Lord, your God, is God: the faithful God who keeps covenant mercy to the thousandth generation toward those who love him and keep his commandments.

Deuteronomy 7:9

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