

Celebrating the Season of Lent



Theme: Forgiveness

In 2006, in a small town southeast of Lancaster, PA, before taking his own life, a lone gunman shot and killed five Amish children inside a one-room schoolhouse and injured five others. This was a horrible tragedy for this small community and for the gunman's family, touching the hearts of many across the nation.

The Amish families so intimately affected by the tragedy were able to transform the sadness and shock of the shooting into a moment that spoke to the power of forgiveness. Those families forgave the gunman in the immediate aftermath of the attack. That gift of forgiveness found expression in the community's compassion, surrounding his family, encircling them, with love at his unannounced funeral. The forgiveness they shared offered healing to the gunman's family, allowing all to move forward with grace. The forgiveness displayed by the Amish community was a choice they made to bring peace to their lives and the lives of the gunman's family. Through their example, the Amish community embodied for a community and for a nation the power of forgiveness to heal.

In this Fourth Week of Lent, let us reflect on the meaning and power of forgiveness in our lives. Like the Amish families, we believe in a God that surrounds us with love, in times of darkness and in times of light. Are there people in our lives we need to forgive? Are there people from whom we need to ask forgiveness? These are choices that can bring a deeper experience of grace and peace to one's life. God's forgiveness is readily available, you just need to make the choice to ask.

Prayers

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

God of Forgiveness,

Lent is a time where we can focus on what separates us from you and make the choice to ask your forgiveness. In that choice, we not only receive your graces, but it also strengthens the love relationship that we have together. Guide us to recognize that for which we need forgiveness and help us to make the choice to ask. Through your love, we pray. Amen.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

God of Grace,

Each day we face a multitude of decisions and conflicts that may not always be resolved in the way we planned, at times leading to anger and disappointment. When those times occur, help us to forgive ourselves and feel your grace to move forward, knowing that you are with us each step of the way. Forgiving ourselves is a way to free us so as to try again. Grateful for your love, we pray. Amen.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

God of Restoration,

Throughout scripture, Jesus forgives the sins of many, restoring them back into their communities. Following the example of Jesus, help us to always forgive those who sin against us, and at the same time asking forgiveness for what we have done to others. Making these choices allows us to restore our communities to places of love and acceptance. Through Jesus' example, we pray. Amen.

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

God of Love,

Saint Mother Teresa is quoted in saying "Whatever our religion, we know that if we really want to love, we must first learn to forgive before anything else." Help us to remember that forgiveness is a major part to loving others and ourselves. Guide us to forgive in order to love more fully. We pray this in your name, God of Love. Amen.

Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

God of Peace,

As we continue to journey these days of Lent, help us to keep in mind that forgiveness opens a multitude of door to peace. Through your grace and love, we become whole through forgiveness, of ourselves and others. We are grateful for your unconditional love for us, and the peace you bring to our lives. With grateful hearts, we pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection

What concretely do I plan to do to deepen my relationship with God during this Lenten season?

How will my participation in the season of Lent renew my commitment to extend the compassionate ministry of Jesus to others, especially people who are poor and vulnerable?

Who do I need to forgive, or need to ask forgiveness in order to experience more peace and grace in my life?