

Forgive as God Forgives

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In Lent, as we ponder our relationship with Christ, perhaps forgiveness comes to mind. Two obstacles might arise in our reflection: the need to forgive others, and the fear of bringing “who the hell we are” to God in asking for God’s forgiveness.

Forgiveness isn’t always easy, is it? Forgiveness can be a process, taking time and an act of the will. An act of love, mercy, and grace, rooted in the understanding that God has first forgiven us. (Remember that line from the Our Father? The one that asks that we be forgiven *as we have forgiven others*? Oops!)

Forgiveness is not given because someone deserves it, but rather because God has forgiven us. Forgiveness sets us free spiritually, and we can trust God to bring about whatever emotional healing is still needed.

If we are willing to admit it, we know ourselves to have failed at times. We are under no illusion about our sinfulness. BUT it is important to remember that we are, as St. John says in his first letter, BELOVED children of God, and already forgiven. St. Paul reinforces that when he says Jesus loved us enough to die for us, despite our sins. What wondrous love! And the medieval mystic, Julian of Norwich, reminds us that “...all will be well. All manner of things will be well.”

Our God is a God of second chances and more. His mercy knows no limits. God’s love and grace far exceeds our ability to sin. That’s what we celebrate in the Sacrament of Penance.

Can we, who are created in the image and likeness of this wonderful God, follow that God in forgiving others?