

*January
In the Year
of Mercy*

*Forgive
others as I
forgive you.*



**Teaching
the Way of Love**
Because humanity passes by way of the family...

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**PLEASE PRAY
THAT**

- Families will cultivate forgiveness in their daily interactions.
- Parents will choose gentleness and mercy when disciplining their children.
- All families will form community of persons that serve life, develop society and share in the life and mission of the Church.
- That husbands and wives will give each other the benefit of the doubt when conflicts arise.
- Children will see in their parents a constant example of forgiveness and love.
- Children will feel the love and mercy of God because of their parent's love.
- Families will reach out to each other in love and support, especially in times of difficulty.

Forgive One Another

Just before the New Year, I decided to watch the news over my lunch. But instead of the noon rundown, a soap opera appeared. Admittedly, my attention was drawn to the scenes and story – though only for about 3 minutes. In that short amount of time, the characters treated each other with bitterness, resentment, and betrayal.

I switched the channel and found the news which, sadly, was not much better. Real life stories of unrest in the world were reported one after the other. Suicides, war, demonstrations... the anchors flipped back and forth with more and more depressing accounts of human injustice. Firmly, I pushed the power off button on the remote and ate in silence.

Revenge was the backbone message on the TV. The actors and anchors did a superb job of showing how commonplace deceit and intentional hostility are in today's world. And, they illustrated well the fruits of aggression, injury, escalation that result when retaliation is sought rather than forgiveness.

Forgiveness is in short supply these days. It seems to have been replaced with a double dose of "an eye for an eye" mentality. Think about it. Most of us, who have felt intense rage, anxiety or depression, know how easy it is to hold on to anger, resentment and thoughts of revenge rather than to pursue reconciliation.

A recently posted meditation said that without forgiveness we corrupt ourselves. The author said that choosing revenge over forgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. She continued to prove her point by citing numerous medical studies that show the consequences of harboring ill will and bearing a grudge against another; stress, high blood pressure, sleeplessness, annoyance, sorrow...

Why is it so hard to forgive?

Part of the reason it is so hard to forgive another is that a grudge feeds on itself. When you're hurt by someone you love and trust, it is very easy to dwell on the situation and allow it to crowd out any thought of forgiveness. This is when resentment, vengeance and hostility can take root. It doesn't take long to find yourself consumed with bitterness or sense of injustice.



Because humanity passes by way of the family...

This is especially true within our family. Offenses committed by those nearest to us often seem to cut the deepest. This is partly true because family problems are ongoing and ever-present. Taking a break from the squabbles with a spouse or children or between siblings is hard. It requires more effort to open your heart time and time again to forgiving repeated transgressions.

And yet, that is exactly what we are obliged to do. God's commandments are exceedingly clear on this issue. When Peter asked Jesus if he needed to forgive another at least 7 times, Jesus straightforward answer was, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times." (Mt 18:22) And, Jesus reminded us that "If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions." (Mt 18:14,15)

Healing requires Forgiveness

Here is the "duh" moment. Forgiving is not easy. But, it is the central message of Christ's teaching to us. There can be no peace without it. Forgiveness is at the core of all healing; physical and spiritual. It is central to healthy relationships, joy-filled marriages and peaceful family life. Everyone's spiritual well-being multiplies when forgiveness is liberally exchanged between people.

Forgiveness is powerful because it springs from God's love and mercy. When we excuse the offenses of another, we release them from their failing and save ourselves from shouldering a grudge. In short, we act according to God's will which places our soul at rest.

Here is your January Challenge

Your challenge for this month is to live out the words of Mother Theresa of Calcutta who will become a Saint this September. Read her quote below and then contemplate the following questions.

Each person's mission is a mission of love... Begin in the place where you are with the people closest to you. Make your homes centers of compassion and forgive endlessly. Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier...at the hour of death when we come face to face with God we are going to be judged on love: not how much we have done, but how much love we put into the doing.

1. How can I make my home a center of compassion and mercy?
2. What can I change in my life to help my family members become better people according to Jesus' commands?
3. Is my daily goal to get everything done or to put love into all that I do?
4. How can I be more intentional when I pray the Our Father, especially when I say the words, ***forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us?***

This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.