

Prayer of Forgiveness – Fr. Carl J Arico

As was so beautifully stated in the CLP booklet on Forgiveness (statements in bold print),
“Forgiving is one of the most difficult and complex gestures

Why is it a complex gesture? – because it is not the normal reaction of humans – our tendency is to get even or withhold when hurt.

and yet, like love, it is one of the things which defines the essence of our humanity.

Love makes us different from the animal world – they are into caring - we are into loving – it is the ‘hallmark’ of our humanity.

Forgiveness at its core is a divine gift of love, a movement of love so profound that it reveals the truth of our nature.

That is why Alexander Pope’s insight is so powerful – *to err is human, to forgive is divine.*

His insights celebrate the 2 armed embrace of forgiveness – there is not doubt that we will err – it is a characteristic of the human condition.

However to forgive can only take place thru the grace of God.

The challenge here is what we mean by forgiveness – it is not a one time experience. It is a process that demands a way of life that has as one of it’s over riding energies - forgiveness.

And yet, the very fact that we do not forgive, or find forgiveness so difficult, reveals another essential quality of our humanness – free will.

When I conduct a workshop I like to have the participants do a little exercise. I divide them into 4 sections and ask them to repeat after me.

Section one is asked to say “to err is human”
Section four is asked to say “to forgive is divine”

Then I ask section 2 to say “I don’t know how to do it”
And section 3 says “I don’t want to do it”.

I then say that there is no way of joining the wisdom of sections 1 and 4 without seriously dealing with section 2 and definitely with section 3..

There is no leaping from to err is human - over to forgive is divine.

We have a God-given ability to choose, to be and to do as we please, as we will.

Forgiveness cannot just be a one-time act or decision, but a process that unfolds and reveals itself the more we consent and open to God’s presence and action in our lives.

How we choose – what we will – defines the level of our being.

Might it be possible to see our difficult relationships as some of our greatest gifts? Forgiveness is not so much about feelings as it is about freedom - an essential quality of the spiritual life. Forgiveness is not so much about the other as it is about ourselves.

What might be the effects experienced by faithfully practicing the Forgiveness Prayer?

Release from the burden of anger and bitterness that upsets our peace.

Removal of any hidden or overt effects of resentment in relation to others.

Release of the power of the Spirit beyond our comprehension which frees our bodies, releases frustration and disappointment.

In seeking to live a contemplative life in the modern world we are invited to make conscious, loving choices.

I envision the prayer of forgiveness as outlined in the CLP booklet as a symphony with an Overture, 4 Movements and a Sending Forth.

The **overture** is a period of centering prayer – clearing the way by consenting to God’s presence and action in our lives – knowing that forgiveness is a divine gift of love – Lord I cannot do this without you.

The **first movement** is the celebration and awaking of our whole being, opening to the healing presence of the Holy Spirit – acknowledging that the ‘issues are in the tissues’ that are body stores the memories of what needs to be forgiven.

The **second movement** invites the person into our inner room in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, the inner room – the room that we have been inspired to pray in in the spirit of Mt. 6:6. In this inner room we welcome our guest and share the hurts that needs to be shared. The guest listens and then we tell them, “I forgive you” – repeating that phase of freedom as many times as needed.

The **third movement** invites the guest to share how we have hurt them – we wait and listen – already knowing on a deeper level some of what they are going to say. When they have finished we repeat as many times as needed “Forgive me”.

The **fourth movement** we invite the guest to leave, letting them know they are more than welcome to come again if needed. Letting them know this is a new beginning and that the seeds of forgiveness have been planted. Spending some additional time with the Holy Spirit we rest awhile to allow the process of forgiveness which we have just experience to penetrate our being on a deeper level.

The **Sending Forth** - As you leave the inner room and return to your ordinary awareness a prayer is said for the guest and for the possibility of some day being able to reconcile with them in God’s time and in God’s way.