

Reflecting on Forgiveness & Human Dignity

Welcome & Introduction

Leader: We come together in prayer to consider what God says to us about mercy and forgiveness. Granting forgiveness to someone that has committed a crime, even done great evil is a struggle for many. However, when asked how many times we should forgive Christ said “seventy times seven.” That doesn’t mean 490 and we stop. It means we’re required to forgive again and again and again. This is not an easy thing to do. It also doesn’t mean that in forgiving we forget. But through forgiveness we create opportunities for healing and growth. May our prayers help us understand we are to be instruments of mercy, and advocates for the sacredness of all life in our world.

Opening Song – Gather Us In

1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
Now is the darkness vanished away,
See in this space our fears and our dreamings,
Brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in the lost and forsaken,
Gather us in the blind and the lame;
Call to us now, and we shall awaken,
We shall arise at the sound of our name.
2. We are the young – our lives are a myst’ry,
We are the old who yearn for your face,
We have been sung throughout all of hist’ry,
Called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in the rich and the haughty,
Gather us in the proud and the strong;
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
Give us the courage to enter the song.
3. Not in the dark of buildings confining,
Not in some heaven, light years away,
But here in this place the new light is shining,
Now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
Gather us in and make us your own;
Gather us in all peoples together,
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

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Ritual

- A candle is lit
- A Bible is enshrined
- A crucifix is enshrined

Leader:

God of mercy, you gave your son Jesus Christ as a gift of salvation for all people. Through his life and witness we understand that all life is sacred, the human dignity of all people is to be respected, and all are deserving of mercy and compassion. Help us to grow in love and see the face of Jesus in all we encounter, the guilty as well as the innocent. We ask this through Christ our Lord ~

All: Amen

Leader: Let us now open our hearts and minds to God’s Word

Reader: A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (Matthew 6:14-15):

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection

Leader: Take a moment and think of a time when someone hurt you - a family member, a friend, anyone. As you take a few moments in silence, consider the following questions:

- What makes it difficult for you to forgive someone?
- Are there people we just can’t or won’t forgive?

~ Allow a few moments for silent reflection ~

Now think of a time when you hurt someone and asked forgiveness:

- How hard was it to ask for forgiveness?
- How did you feel when you were forgiven?

~ Allow a few moments for silent reflection ~

It is difficult to forgive, and it is difficult to ask for forgiveness. However, these are moments when we must be open to God’s grace in our lives. God gives all of us the opportunity for redemption of our sins. When we support abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty or other means that seek to end life unnaturally we limit or interfere with the possibility for personal redemption and reconciliation with God.

A Litany of Forgiveness

Leader: *Let us pray... Gracious and loving God, Jesus told us we must forgive and forgive again, as you forgive us. We ask forgiveness for our failings, or for the times we have allowed the failings of others to harden our hearts and minds.*

All respond: Have mercy on us, Lord.

- *For the times we've been hurt and found it difficult to forgive...*
- *For the times we have turned our back on someone rather than seek reconciliation...*
- *For the times we've hurt others, intentionally or unintentionally...*
- *For the times we have turned away from the poor, the sick, the imprisoned...*
- *For the times we have made fun of someone, excluded someone, made someone feel they were unimportant...*

All respond: Lord, hear our prayer.

- *Help us to have hearts of compassion and love...*
- *Help us to put the needs of others before our own...*
- *Help us bring healing to all those lives touched by violence, crime or neglect...*
- *Help us nourish a culture of life that respects the dignity of all...*
- *Help us be models of conversion and transformation...*

Concluding Prayers

Leader: *Let us pray...*

Loving God, we ask you to hold in your special care all those that have their lives threatened by means of violence or punishment.

Strengthen those that stand against the unnatural ending of human life. Open the hearts and minds of your people so they may come to better understand that all life is sacred, even the lives of those that have done great evil.

All: *Amen*

Leader: *And may God bless us and keep us in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ~*

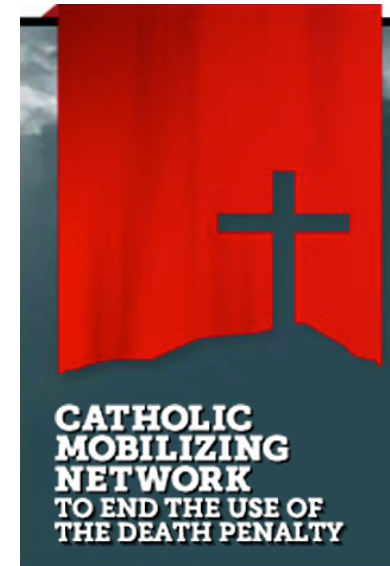
All: *Amen*

Leader: *Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord and one another.*

All: *Thanks be to God.*

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A Prayer Service for Youth



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