



SIX

Corresponds to P. 46 in Participants' Book

Disciples as Forgiven Forgivers

*Transformation through
repentance, remembrance, and reconciliation*

Brief synopsis: EAs disciples we strive to live so as to be known by our love, we falter from time to time. We give in to anger, pride, jealousy, complacency, laziness, and other temptations. In doing so we not only disobey the Lord, we also bring harm to others in our community. Seeking forgiveness and forgiving others plays an important role in our discipleship.

GATHER

Often the one we most need to forgive is ourselves. Reflect on the past month and share moments when you let yourself down. How did you find ways to forgive yourself?

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Our failure to be true even to our own accepted standards.

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our self-deception in the face of temptation:

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our choosing of the worse when we knew the better.

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our failure to apply to ourselves the standards of conduct that we demand of others;

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our blindness to the suffering of others and my slowness to be taught:

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our complacency toward wrongs that don't touch us and our over sensitiveness to those that do:

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our slowness to see the good in others and the evil in ourselves.

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our hardness of heart toward our neighbor's faults and our readiness to make allowance for our own:

All: O Lord, forgive!

Leader: Our unwillingness to believe that you have called us to a small work and our neighbors to a great one.

All: O Lord, forgive!

- With permission,

<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=2246>

REPORT ON ACTIONS

Take time to report on how you engaged in action as a result of the last meeting. It is encouraging to hear what others are doing and prompts us to put our faith into practice more intentionally.

Review what the group has learned since the last meeting about parish ministries. Evaluate the progress the group is making toward any major ACT to which it has committed for the year.

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

The first scripture passage ends the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here we focus on God's expectations of the non-prodigal. Sometimes this passage is difficult to accept. It seems unfair to the older son, but it has a very important message: even our steadfastness in faith and in good works is a generous gift of God. We are, therefore, called upon to be as generous with one another. In the second passage Paul tells us that we are responsible not only to care for one another physically and emotionally, but even more importantly – spiritually. To have the courage to help another disciple turn from sin is a special grace, but we are called to pray for this grace and accept the burden of companioning one another on the road to holiness. This obligation, like that of the older son in the parable, is among the most challenges tasks of Christian discipleship.

A reading from the holy gospel according Luke (15: 31-31).

“He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Galatians (6: 12).

“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's

burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

1. What model of forgiveness is expressed in the story of the Prodigal Son in the gospel of Luke?
2. In his letter to the Galatians, what are the “burdens” St. Paul is asking Christians to carry for one another?

“No domestic church does all this perfectly. But neither does any parish or diocesan church. All members of the Church struggle daily to become more faithful disciples of Christ.” (NCCB, *Follow the Way of Love*, p. 10)

“... deficiency, limitation, error, and sin are inherent in domestic churches [and other small faith communities] . . . And interplay of light and darkness is not only characteristic of ‘the historical situation in which the family lives,’ as John Paul II asserts, but equally so within family life, even for families who appreciate themselves as domestic churches. Thus, [our] . . . task in exploring or working with domestic churches is not to concentrate solely on ideals, nor to give up on them as unrealistic, but to attend to the dynamic and often tense relationship between the two which is at the heart of the families’ growth as humans and as Christians.” (Bourg, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered*, p. 67)

SOCIAL INQUIRY

“Forgiveness enables the disciples to travel together. Without it, each would travel alone, alienated from others by everything from petty grievance to unimaginable cruelty. A petition charts a single course toward human community: ‘Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors’ (Matt 6:12; cf. Luke 11:4). Repeating these words in daily prayer makes them no easier to live....

“Jesus urged disciples to pray daily for the ability to forgive, reminding them that they too stood in need of forgiveness. As the disciples experienced Jesus’ steady pardon of their fecklessness,

their faithlessness, and their need for sleep, Jesus hoped they would find it easier to forgive those who had wronged them....

“The forgiveness that discipleship demands stretches beyond the pardon of isolated offense to open the possibility of a more charitable stance toward the world.... Christians become more forgiving people by living into the Lord’s Prayer: we practice forgiveness. This does not happen overnight; it is a miracle of grace that forgiveness happens at all. Christian forgiveness transforms us through repentance, remembrance, and reconciliation. Repentance enables disciples to turn away from violence....

“As we pray, ‘Forgive us our trespasses...,’ we remind ourselves that we are all sinners in need of repentance.... Over time and in community God works on us, transforming us into forgiven forgivers. The practice of forgiveness is indispensable for the journey of discipleship, inviting us to live into a promised peace.”

- Martha Stortz, “The Practice of Forgiveness”

“Paul gives this word in Galatians 6:2: ‘Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.’ In that context he was talking about what happens when you find a friend who is struggling with sin. But throughout the Bible we’re meant to care for one another, to love one another, and to help one another. To be a Christian is to be connected with others—to be in relationship. Jesus did not simply call us to love God, but also to love our neighbor. He started a church to be a place where believers would encourage one another, provoke one another and challenge one another to good deeds, and where we would bear one another’s burdens. That’s what it means to be a part of a team.

- Pastor Adam Hamilton, Senior Pastor

From your own experience, **OBSERVE:**

1. What are the injuries that family members often need to forgive one another for?

The deep ties that bind family members often mean that these are the people to whom we can do the most harm. Unkind words and taking the others for granted are among those slights that easily show up in family interactions. The focus of this question is meant to be on day-to-day observations. As a leader you may find yourself having to be careful that “blaming” doesn’t enter into this conversation. It is meant as an exploration, not a confession.

2. Name ways in which CFM, either within your group or at the national level, has failed to support your discipleship. Once again it is important to keep the observations offered in response to this question on an objective, non-emotional level. What do members hope to find in the CFM community that hasn’t been there for them? Right now is not a time for offering solutions, but for getting the problems on the table for later discussion and action.

3. Explore what reconciliation services your parish or diocese offers. This is an important Observe to assign at the last meeting. Encourage the members who agree to research this question to look not only in your own parish, but at neighboring parishes as well.

In the light of Christ’s teachings, **JUDGE:**

1. What is the best way to seek forgiveness? “One cannot live without seeking forgiveness, or at least, one cannot live at peace, especially in the family. We wrong one another every day. We must take into account these mistakes, due to our frailty and our selfishness. However, what we are asked to do is to promptly heal the wounds that we cause, to immediately

reweave the bonds that break within the family.” – Pope Francis, [Wednesday Audience](#) (11.4.15)

2. How is it possible to carry another’s burden of sin, or for them to carry yours?

If members are struggling to answer this question, we can ask them to ponder Matthew 11: 25-30: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

How does this apply our lives? Can we offer rest and comfort to one who struggles against temptation?

3. Is it best to “forgive and forget”? Why or why not?

Consider the following process, developed for seeking reconciliation between spouses, it can be powerful in many situations where discord and hurt exist:

- **Pray:** Ask the Lord’s healing for situations in your marriage, family or other relationships that aren’t peaceful.
- **Reflect:** What areas of selfishness do you struggle with the most? How do they affect others?
- **Do:** Don’t hesitate to quickly speak healing words in a tense situation: “I love you,” “I forgive you,” “I’m sorry.” These can defuse tension and re-focus the conversation.

<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/marriage-mercy-retreat-day-seven-forgiveness-family/>

4. How can we help others reconcile?

This can often be best done as a group action. See how the Campaign for Human Development brought two very different groups together to work for good in their community.

http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/upload/15-003_cchd-newsletter-4.pdf

Based on our discussion, **ACT:**

Provide some examples of past acts that groups have completed-add links to the CFM website where those acts are described...

1. Through a prayerful examination of conscience, identify words or acts for which you ought to seek forgiveness. Pray for the courage to do so even if your attempts will not be well received. Consider setting a date and time for group members to gather and meditate together to complete this ACT. Perhaps ask a member of the parish's pastoral staff to lead the prayer service. It would be a silent reflection. No verbal sharing, only sharing the sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Members may or may not wish to report on the results at the next meeting.

2. If someone has come to you because they are struggling with temptation, be there for them unconditionally and without judgment.

Members are not called to instigate this dialogue. It is not their call, but that of the person struggling. But members can be alert to signals from others that they need to share and be open to listening. Give advice only if asked – and ordinarily you will most likely direct the seeker to a professional or an organization (such as AA, Alanon, Catholic Social Services or others) that can help them. Caution those who undertake this mission that they will not be reporting back to the group. They are expected to keep the confidence of person seeking help.

3. When you are finding forgiveness particularly difficult, meditate upon the cross of Jesus and the words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24).

4. Attend a reconciliation service as a group with your CFM group and your families.

TAKE CFM HOME

The next time an incident within your family causes your children to be angry with you or a sibling, sit down with them. Ask them to think about how it made them feel. Angry? Embarrassed? Disappointed? Sad? Help them state that to the offender (this may be mutual).

Then: *With younger children:* Hand each a pretend balloon. Ask him or her to blow all of those feelings into the balloon. When they are ready to let go of the feelings, they let the balloon sail into the sky. When ready, imagine that the balloon gently pops, spreading a dusting of love and compassion to both parties.

With older children: Write a letter, stating what caused the upset and how they feel about it. Then have your child write a compassion statement or one of forgiveness to the offender and to him- or herself. End the exercise by having them rip the letter up into the garbage, signifying the release of forgiveness.

-Jaimie Perillo, "How to Teach Children Forgiveness"

LOOK AHEAD TO THE NEXT MEETING

Take a look at the Observes for the next meeting to see what needs to be done in preparation

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

1. Phone or email host if you cannot attend.
2. Look ahead at the Observe questions for the next meeting.
3. Who could you invite to join our group?

If children have come to the meeting with their parents, gather them to join you in the closing prayer.

CLOSING PRAYER

Happy we whose offence is forgiven, whose sin is remitted. Happy we to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, in whose spirit is no guile.

We have acknowledged our sins; we do not hide our guilt, we say:
"I will confess my offence to the Lord."

And you, Lord, have forgiven us.

So, let faithful men and women pray to you in the time of need.

The floods of water may reach high but they will stand secure.

You are our hiding place, Lord; you save us from distress.

Rejoice, rejoice in the lord, exult, you just!

O come, ring out your joy. All you upright of heart.

-*The Lord Forgives*, Catholic Online, with permission

And let us pray the Prayer for the Christian Family Movement
(found on Page 80).

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