



Finding God

Our Response to God's Gifts

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We are not the only ones in pain.

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When we ask for forgiveness, trust will grow.

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off the hook?
No. Forgiveness is something you do for yourself.

Three Ways to Improve Family Relationships

My family of five recently moved from Chicago to St. Louis. During our first week in our new home, we were still busy unpacking, without access to the luxuries we had taken for granted, such as television and Wi-Fi. In addition, we were on Christmas break from school and jobs. This new situation forced us to communicate, cooperate, and share. We realized quickly we were out of practice being a family. In the past, it was too easy for us to retreat to another room and close the door, hide behind social media, or bury ourselves in our fast-paced lives. We had become a lazy family.

While the move disrupted my family's routine, it taught me three important ways to improve our relationship:

- Do simple things together on a regular basis. Take a walk, bake, cheer on your favorite sports team, make a craft, or go grocery shopping together.
- Focus on one another. Put your phone in another room so you're not tempted to text or check social media. Allow plenty of time for each family activity. Don't overschedule or give an activity a deadline. Make sure you are really present to one another.
- Open your heart. Yes, life gets hard and messy. Realize family members are human and make mistakes. Forgive. Give one another the benefit

of the doubt. Don't hold on to anger or resentment. As we say in our family, put it in a bubble and let it float away.

Pope Francis said, "Perfect families do not exist. This must not discourage us.



Quite the opposite. Love is something we learn; love is something we live; love grows as it is 'forged' by the concrete situations which each particular family experiences. Love is born and constantly develops amid lights and shadows."

Families are constantly evolving. These relationships need work and effort. I am learning to enjoy this journey. †

Michelle Cook is the communication and program coordinator for the LaSalle Retreat Center in Glencoe, MO.



3

MINUTE RETREAT

Spread Peace

God gives us plenty of opportunities to seek forgiveness. Hardly a day goes by when we don't say and do hurtful things, make hasty decisions, and lose track of the common good. No wonder Jesus included forgiveness in the prayer he taught us.

Stop for a moment. Take some deep breaths and relax your mind. Look back on your day and identify times when you needed to forgive others or yourself. Ask God to help you overcome whatever keeps you from being a person who forgives, a person of peace. Sit quietly and rest in that place of love and forgiveness. Resolve to spread this peace with those you encounter today. End by praying the Glory Be to the Father. ■



For a daily online 3-Minute Retreat, go to www.3MinuteRetreat.com.



HOLY DESPERATION

A House Built on Rock

Science continually aspires to solutions that eliminate our need for one another: a pill, an injection, a surgery, a life spent before a computer screen engaged in “virtual reality.”

The tragicomic fact is that we are saved by one another. And part of the way we are saved is by coming clean with our consciences.

We can’t come fully into harmony with ourselves, God, and the people around us until we’ve made a concerted effort to clear away the wreckage of our past and make reparation for it. We can’t know what our mission on earth is until our souls are realigned with true north: love, Christ.

I have many times sat across from, and told some of my darkest secrets to . . . all sorts of ordinary folks like myself, to truly great effect. I have become friends with many of these people; they have been deeply loyal and generous friends to me.

But I’m not going to *kneel* before any of those people. That I *want* to kneel; want to be absolved and set right; that the Church is built, in a sense, upon that very desire, makes me know that my house is built on solid rock. ■

Excerpt from *Holy Desperation* by Heather King (Loyola Press, 2017)

LOVE IN MARRIAGE | Forgiveness and Growth

Two beautiful, large oak trees stand tall in our front yard. I stare at them often and ponder how they are both individual entities, yet over the years their limbs have become so intertwined that they are almost like one solid tree. They remind me of marriage: a man and a woman come together as separate individuals but commit to become one.

After a cross-country move, my focus was on self-survival in the months after our transition. My own pain became my focus, and I forgot the “we” in our marriage by not noticing my husband’s hurt. A wise friend gently reminded me that I was not the only one struggling with our move. Her words were my wake-up call as to how I was acting like a single oak and not the two oaks who were stronger because their limbs were intertwined. I was eaten up with guilt about ignoring the pain of the person I love most in this world.



Upon noticing my selfish focus, I spoke with my husband and apologized for not seeing his pain. He admitted to feeling like he was walking a tough journey alone. After we both shared how we felt, he accepted my apology and forgave me, and he offered his own apology for not walking together through the transition period.

After the words of forgiveness were exchanged, I could feel a weight lift from me. Even though the season of transition continued, forgiving each other enabled us to grow together, like the two strong oaks who are always becoming one. ■

Becky Eldredge is a spiritual director, retreat facilitator, and author of *Busy Lives and Restless Souls* (Loyola Press, 2017).



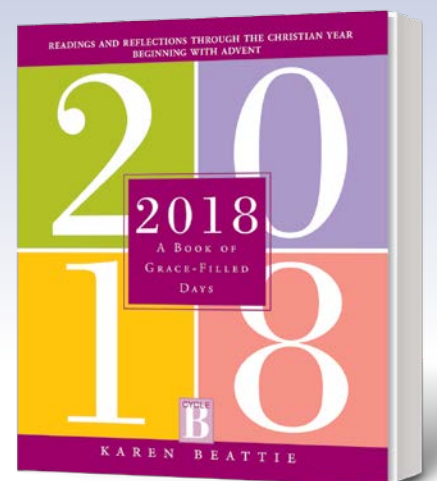
The Joy of Love POPE FRANCIS

“Today we recognize that being able to forgive others implies the liberating experience of understanding and forgiving ourselves.” ■

Moments of Solace

This daily devotional notes major feast days, saint commemorations, and holidays, providing a few minutes of solace for quiet prayer and meditation. *2018: A Book of Grace-Filled Days* is an accessible and insightful way to deepen our connection to God’s loving presence and fill each day with grace. ■

2018: A Book of Grace-Filled Days by Karen Beattie (Loyola Press, 2017).



Finding God: Our Response to God's Gifts

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A HEARTFELT SORRY

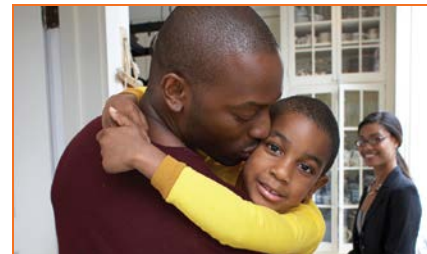
His son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.”

—LUKE 15:21

Children see all the ways we hurt others, even in our families. Do they also see all the ways we ask for forgiveness?

While we rarely intend to hurt people, we can hurt others in small, insignificant ways. We can be impatient with our kids, deride our spouses, or be unkind to colleagues. We might share gossip or be rude when our food order isn't delivered fast enough.

Recently I committed the 21st-century sin of speaking ill of a friend in a text—and then sending it to her inadvertently. She responded tersely, “I don't think you meant to send this to me.” Ashamed and embarrassed, I knew I had to make one of the most difficult phone calls of my life. Without a heartfelt “I'm so sorry; there's no



excuse,” I would leave wounds untended and feelings hurt. Mistrust and misunderstanding would take root where trust and care should be planted.

The hurts we cause become opportunities for healing, helping us understand that a genuine apology is not a mark of weakness, but calls forth the strength to acknowledge our flaws. ■

Judie Gillespie is chair of the theology department at Divine Savior Holy Angels High School in Milwaukee, WI.

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SAINTLY HABITS

A Lesson in Justice



St. Peter Faber (1506–1546) tutored Ignatius of Loyola in Latin grammar during their time together at the University of Paris. And Faber

teaches me an important lesson in justice: “Seek the right devotion to God and his saints, and you will easily

find right relations to your neighbors, toward friend and foe!”

Unfortunately, I don't always want to find right relations with others (which is a good definition of justice); I just want to be right.

As you can imagine, this leads me to be pushy, dismissive, arrogant, and confrontational. If my need to be right all the time doesn't lead me to sin, then it definitely leads me into temptation.

But in reading St. Peter's words, I wonder: Do I act that way toward God?



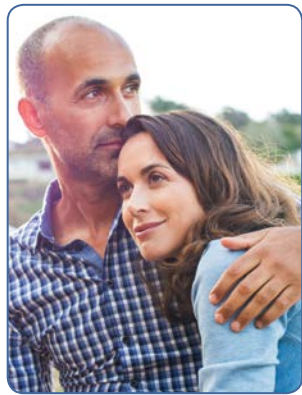
Do I try to impose my will upon God instead of doing God's will?

To live in right relationship with God—to pray “thy will be done”—requires more than a little humility. I am required to admit my limitations, trust in God, and realize that not only do I not have all the answers, I don't need to. This attitude will allow me to live in right relationship with my neighbors. ■

Bob Burnham, OFS, is the author of *Little Lessons from the Saints: 52 Simple and Surprising Ways to See the Saint in You* (Loyola Press, 2017).



Doesn't forgiveness enable others to walk all over us?



Forgiveness is incredibly difficult.

Forgiving is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. Second, forgiveness calls out the wrong another person has done, even if that person is unable to ask for forgiveness. As Jesus was dying on the Cross, he said the words, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) These words were a public indictment of the wrong that had been done to him and made for a powerful statement of who actually possessed the greater strength.

Forgiving someone does not mean that the behavior was acceptable. Rather, forgiveness turns the matter over to God. ■

Joe Paprocki is national consultant for faith formation for Loyola Press and author of *A Church on the Move* (Loyola Press, 2016).

a: *Forgiveness is incredibly difficult and, at first glance, may appear to be granting permission to others to wrong us without fear of retribution or consequence.* Forgiveness, however, is not to be equated with letting someone off the hook.

First of all, forgiveness is something that you do for yourself. Forgiveness allows you to let go of feelings that, left unchecked, will do more damage to you than to the one who hurt you. According to an old saying, the inability to

5 THINGS

Five Things I Learned From . . .

WEB • BOOKS • MUSIC • MOVIES • TV

Once Upon a Time

The television show *Once Upon a Time* retells fairy tales I grew up with and reminds me of faith lessons I learned as a child.



- 1. The love of family carries immense power.** Through plotlines spanning time and space, the Charming family pulls together to get through any danger.
- 2. Everybody is capable of love.** Even the Evil Queen has motives of love and can make daily choices to become a better person.
- 3. Imagination has a place for adults.**
- 4. Good stories stay with us.** Adults remember and treasure stories heard in childhood.
- 5. Embrace complex plot twists.** Life changes happen; how we respond is key. ■

Envisioning how stories might play out gives us confidence in decisions and hope for change.

Denise Gorss is a junior high catechist and web editor at Loyola Press. She enjoys collecting stories as she travels the world on pilgrimages.

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The Meal Box

How to Enjoy *The Meal Box*.

- 1. Learn more about one another by asking this question from *The Meal Box* at your next family meal.**
- 2. Allow each person time to respond, encouraging them to expand on their answer whenever possible.**
- 3. Watch the mealtime conversation get cookin'!**

More mealtime fun can be found in *The Meal Box* by **Bret Nicholas** and **Tom McGrath** (Loyola Press, 2009).

