

# Forgiveness

## Objective:

Forgiveness comes in many forms. Here are some quotes from some diverse authors to illustrate the widely held belief in forgiveness:

- "Mistakes are always forgivable, if one has the courage to admit them." - Bruce Lee
- "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude." - Martin Luther King, Jr.
- "Every time God forgives us, God is saying that God's own rules do not matter as much as the relationship that God wants to create with us." - Richard Rohr
- "It's one of the greatest gifts you can give yourself, to forgive. Forgive everybody." - Maya Angelou
- "Forgiveness liberates the soul. It removes fear. That is why it is such a powerful weapon." - Nelson Mandela
- "If we really want to love we must learn how to forgive." – St. Teresa of Calcutta

**Suggested Song:** Amazing Grace (Blue 36, Red 586)

## Bible and Catechism Readings:

### Psalm 32: 5

Then I declared my sin to you; my guilt I did not hide. I said, "I confess my transgression to the Lord," and you took away the guilt of my sin. Selah

### James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.

### Psalm 130: 3-4

If you, Lord, keep account of sins, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness and so you are revered.

### Catechism 982

There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. "There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest." Christ who died for all men desires that the Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin.

**Saint:** St. Francis de Sales (1567 – 1622) He was the eldest son of a nobleman and his mother's family was part of one of the noblest families in the Duchy of Savoy. While attending school in Paris in 1566 Francis de Sales attended a theological discussion about predestination that convinced him of his damnation to hell. A personal crisis of despair resulted. That conviction lasted through December 1586. His great despair made him physically ill and even bedridden for a time. Sometime in either late December or early January 1587, he visited the old parish of Saint-Étienne-des-Grès, Paris, where he prayed the "Memorare" before a famed statue of Our Lady of Good Deliverance, a Black Madonna. He consecrated himself to the Blessed Virgin Mary and decided to dedicate his life to God with a vow of chastity.[3] He then became a tertiary of the Minim Order.

De Sales ultimately concluded that God had good in store for him because "God is love", as the First Epistle of John attests. This faithful devotion to God not only expelled his doubts but also influenced the rest of his life and his teachings. His way of teaching Catholic spirituality is often referred to as the Way of Divine Love, or the Devout Life, taken from a book he wrote of a similar name: Introduction to the Devout Life.

## Vignette:

A small poster with the quote “Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself” from St. Francis de Sales hung on Tim’s office wall for years. He only occasionally actively took notice of it, and even more rarely thought more deeply about it. After a period of anger, guilt, self-doubt & depression, Tim stumbled upon the second part of St. Francis’ quote “Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections, but instead set about remedying them – every day begin the task anew.” Tim took this as a sign that he needed to move on from his anger, forgive others and himself.

Tim tried to follow the words of St. Francis, but felt like something was missing, so he went to confession and confessed specifically about the things he felt guilty about and about other people he hadn’t forgiven. Tim made a concerted effort to directly forgive or at least forgive in his own heart and mind himself and those who wronged him. Even this somehow fell short. Later Tim was speaking to a friend about still feeling guilty after going to confession, his friend’s response was to first ask if he had repeated the same sin, Tim said he had not. His friend then asked why Tim thought he was so unique & special. Tim was confused by the question. His friend responded that he must be special if the priest’s absolution wasn’t good enough since it is an absolution from God through the priest. Tim and his friend laughed until they were crying. Tim thanked his friend and finally was able let go of his guilt.

## Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Do you remember a time you were forgiven by someone? Do you remember how you felt and what was in your mind and heart at that moment?

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Do you have trouble forgiving yourself? Why are you hanging on to the guilt? What steps could you take to resolve it?

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How should I deal with someone who won’t forgive me even though I have told them I am deeply sorry?

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How has going to confession helped in your need to forgive someone who has said they were sorry?

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## Action Plan:

Are there people in your life whom you have not forgiven or conversely haven’t forgiven you? Consider seeking them out and asking for forgiveness or forgiving them.

Discuss the concepts of contrition, confession and satisfaction(penance) with your children.

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