

**Sunday, September 11, 2016**

## **Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion**

### **Mass Readings:**

**1st Reading:** Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

**Responsorial:** Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

**2nd Reading:** 1 Timothy 1:12-17

**Gospel:** Luke 15:1-32

## **Forgiving Others as God has Forgiven Us**

*This man welcomes sinners. (Luke 15:2)*

Fifteen years ago today, we saw the twin towers at the World Trade Center fall, the Pentagon burst into flames, and an airliner crash into a field in Pennsylvania. The scenes were both heartbreaking and horrifying. And yet as terrible, sinful, and evil as this attack was (or any attack like it), it is important that we keep in mind Paul's words in today's second reading: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and because of his sacrificial act, everyone who repents will be "mercifully treated" (1 Timothy 1:15, 16).

Sometimes, it's next to impossible to forgive someone, especially in those situations in which a horrible sin has been committed. But one look at the Gospel tells us that God's entire relationship with us is based on love and mercy and forgiveness, whether it is forgiveness for the "big sins" of the prodigal son or the "minor sins" committed by his brother.

All of the parables in today's Gospel illustrate just how far God will go to seek and save the lost. It's safe to say that people who can execute something as horrendous as a massive terror attack have lost their way. Yet God loves them; he longs to bring them into his kingdom. He yearns for them to turn away from their sins and find the mercy that is open to everyone.

Closer to home, we may be struggling to forgive someone who has hurt us. It could be a devastating wound or a minor snub. But no matter how much or how little it hurts, God asks us to try our best to forgive.

So try to imitate your heavenly Father today. Make a list of the relationships in your life that may be wounded or broken, and ask him for the grace to forgive. If you can't forgive all at once, ask him for the grace to take one step closer to mercy. Every step counts!

*"Father, help me to let go of my hurts and my resentments. Help me to bring peace and reconciliation where there is hurt and division."*

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**Questions for Reflection or Discussion :**

1. The first reading today describes how the people of Israel “turned aside” from God by “making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it, sacrificing to it, and crying out, “This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!”” It also describes God’s wrath against idolatry and those who would put created things above him. Like the Israelites, we too can put the things of this world ahead of our worship and obedience to God.
  - What areas of your life have the potential to be (or are) “idols”?
  - Are their familiar patterns of behavior, or even sin, that you have a tendency to return to when confronted with difficulties?
2. The responsorial psalm speaks of David’s cry for the forgiveness and the mercy of God. It is also a cry for a “clean heart” and a “steadfast spirit.”
  - How might you take better advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to receive a “clean heart” and a “steadfast spirit”?
3. In the second reading, Paul tells how he himself, once “the foremost” of sinners, received God’s mercy. He went on to say that he was “mercifully treated” so that in him, “Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for all those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life” (1 Timothy 1:16).
  - How might the witness of your life, and your service to God and the Church, be seen as an example to others of God’s love and mercy?
  - How willing are you to tell others of God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ, and its impact on your life? What holds you back from doing it?
4. In the Gospel reading, we read of the complaints being made against Jesus by the Pharisees and scribes: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
  - How well are you reaching out to others, especially those totally different from you or less fortunate.
  - How might you go the “extra mile” to serve your family, your parish, your co-workers, and others?
5. The Gospel also recounts the parable of the prodigal son. It ends with these words by the father to the older son who refused to join in the celebration for the younger son’s return: “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.”
  - Like the prodigal son, how have you valued what God the Father could do for you more than you valued your relationship of love and intimacy with him?
  - How might you use the example of the father in the parable as an inspiration in your own life?
  - What is your level of hope and trust in your heavenly Father’s love for your family, especially for those who may be far from the Lord right now?
6. The meditation on the Gospel reading tells us “that God’s entire relationship with us is based on love and mercy and forgiveness, whether it is forgiveness for the ‘big sins’ of the prodigal son or the ‘minor sins’ committed by his brother.” It goes on to speak of the importance of forgiving others as God has forgiven us and ends with these words: “So try to imitate your heavenly Father today. Make a list of the relationships in your life that may be wounded or broken, and ask him for the grace to forgive. If you can’t forgive all at once, ask him for the grace to take one step closer to mercy. Every step counts!”
  - How can you respond to these words?
  - How can you take that “one step closer to mercy”?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask your heavenly Father for the grace to let go of the ways you may have been hurt by others, so that you can bring Jesus’ healing love and forgiveness to those “in most need of his mercy. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

***“Father, help me to let go of my hurts and my resentments. Help me to bring peace and reconciliation where there is hurt and division.”***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: [www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)

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