

Homily: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent: Cycle C: 2016: Is 43: 16-21; Ps 126; Phil 3: 8-14; Jn 8: 1-11  
“The Gift of Forgiveness”

The gift of Jesus’s forgiveness brings healing to soul and relationships, both with God and other people. Do we seek the Lord’s forgiveness and one another’s forgiveness, in a spirit of faith and repentance? Lent is a special time to reflect upon this reality.

1. **What keeps us from asking for forgiveness?** The biggest obstacle often times is our **pride**: not wanting to admit we messed up, made some stupid, bad, or evil choices in our life; or thinking we are beyond forgiveness, which sometimes leads to even thoughts of despair - this is a direct attack of satan. **Remember no one or no thing is beyond God’s mercy and forgiveness.** The **Divine Mercy devotion** is such an important reminder of this reality. Strive to pray the chaplet of Divine mercy, daily, in humility of heart, asking God for forgiveness for yourself and for others. What is another thing that sometimes keeps us from asking for forgiveness? **Shame**: which is another form of pride, thinking to ourselves: *how could I have done such a thing?* **Let it go!** Humble yourself and turn to the Lord for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Confession/Reconciliation and don’t hide ANY SIN there, out of a sense of embarrassment and shame. **What have you to lose - other than possibly your soul?!☺**- if it is a serious matter and you don’t turn to the Lord for His tender forgiveness in this beautiful Sacrament. If you haven’t done so already, there are many opportunities for receiving the Sacrament in the next two weeks, especially on Wednesday night when 5 priests including myself will be hearing Confessions at 7 pm for our Lenten Penance Service. I invite esp. those who have been away from Confession for a long time to get back on track.
2. **The lack of forgiveness for ourselves and others holds us back, stunts our souls and takes away a beautiful inner sense of joy, peace, and having a magnanimous (or big-hearted) spirit in relation to others.** The old wise saying is: *don’t sweat the small stuff!* Give others the benefit of the doubt, and if that is hard to do sometimes because the matter is a bigger deal: **pray, pray, and pray** some more for the people who hurt you. **We are much less likely to be petty, self-righteous, and gossipy in relation to others if we truly accept God’s forgiveness in**

our life because we will then hopefully want to imitate His tender love in relation to others, for we are forgiven to the extent we forgive others, as the petition in the Our Father so beautifully puts it: ***Father, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.*** If we strive, in God's grace, to be a person of forgiveness we will have a spirit that rejoices in life and people - despite its difficulties at times, big and small. We will embrace the difficulties as a challenge with God to surmount, rather than a crushing blow to our spirit that drives us into discouragement and despair, and possibly the anger that causes us to lash out at the world and the people around us in frustration. This all presupposes that we are receiving the strength of God to do so, and this only comes from cultivating a deep interior life through prayer and sound spiritual reading of the Scriptures, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the lives of the saints, and other good Catholic spiritual books on a daily basis. As Jesus says, *"Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will refresh you, for I am gentle and humble of heart. For my yoke is easy and my burden light."*

- 3. Finally we must ask God for forgiveness; accept His forgiveness and love; and then strive to live in the present moment with a purpose of amendment:** *Go and sin no more,* as Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery today. **Once we turn to the Lord and ask for forgiveness** - which in the case of serious or mortal sins, normally can only be forgiven in the Sacrament of Confession (not in the Penitential Rite at Mass (venial sins forgiven) or simply by talking to the Lord in our own prayers: see *John 20:20-22* **the** Scriptural basis for the Sacrament of Confession) - **we should be filled with an attitude or spirit of gratitude for the Lord's kindness in forgiving us, and now we want to forgive others and accept their forgiveness - if we have hurt or sinned against them.** We will then want to spread the joy we experience of being forgiven by God with others. The woman caught in adultery is possibly **Mary Magdalene**. This could very well be the case and makes sense in light of what we know about the life of Mary Magdalene from the Gospels and Tradition that she was the woman Jesus cast seven devils out of and was possibly a prostitute before Jesus set her free from

that life of sexual slavery. She subsequently gave powerful testimony to the saving work of Jesus in her life in her witness to others, especially after the Resurrection when Jesus first appeared to her: she became “the apostle to the apostles”, as one of the early saints put it. **The same is to happen in our lives, whether we have committed sins big or small, we are ALL in need of the Lord’s forgiveness, for even one little sin is too many in relation to the all holy God!** Fortunately God is not only all just but all merciful, thankfully, ☺ and calls us to conversion of heart and to intimate union with Him, instead of just wiping us out because of sin! *How grateful we need to be for this sublime reality, by witnessing like St. Mary Magdalene to the Lord’s loving forgiveness in our lives, by each day seeking out the Lord and His truth found in our Catholic Faith on a deeper level, wanting to live it in its fullness, and pointing other people - who also may be shackled in a prison of sin and lack of forgiveness, hate, and regret - to the loving heart of the Lord, esp. in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We need to constantly remind ourselves and others that Jesus can heal us and all people, too, if only we turn to him with a sense of sorrow and repentance, and let go of our pride and shame.* Then we can say with St. Paul, “*I consider everything as a loss in light of the supreme good of **knowing** (not simply knowing about) Christ Jesus as my Lord.*” And we can accept the words of the Lord in the prophet Isaiah “*Remember not the events of the past; ... see I am doing something new. Now it springs forth, do you perceive it?*” Remember the Lord is not a God who lives in the past, but in the present and future. He wants to create us anew. The devil, on the other hand, wants us to live in the past and have it shackle us in the present and future; so that we never grow spiritually, but remain stunted in our sin. Don’t listen to him!! *Confess your sins, accept God’s forgiveness, forgive others and ask for others’ forgiveness, if need be, and move on. Forgiveness transforms our lives and makes us want to draw closer to the Lord who is the source of all forgiveness through the mystery of His Saving act of Love and Forgiveness on the Cross.* May we draw close to Jesus and never abandon Him again through our pride and shame. **Truly accept the Lord’s forgiveness and you will never want to abandon Him again - your life will be transformed.** God bless you.