



OUR LADY OF
LOURDES
CATHOLIC PARISH

THE LOURDES WORD

WINTER 2025



~Winter Theme~
Forgiveness

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www.ollindy.org

Load Lightener

by Kate Cabell

On December 5, 2024, after a brief illness, The Lourdes Word lost a longtime talented contributor, Kate Cabell. "Kate's kindness, thoughtfulness and care for friends and family was legendary as were her wit and wisdom." Hopefully many were blessed by her beautiful faith sharing. The Lourdes Word committee is dedicating this issue in her memory. Below is an article by Kate published in the Fall 2022 issue. May our beloved friend rest in God's peace and sing with a choir of angels.

The Covid pandemic allowed me to live a very comfortable life. Being an introvert, I was suddenly being told to stay home, and for me, it was heavenly – no more invitations, no more obligations, no more having to go here, there, or anywhere! That idyllic life lasted for months. But now life has returned to normal, and I am finding it a bit difficult to force myself to go out into the world. Some days it takes everything I've got to force myself to run what used to be simple errands.

A trip to go shopping lies before me like the twelve labors of Hercules. Groceries, hardware store, and post office line the list, and God forbid if I have to stop for gas! I force myself up in the morning, get as ready as I'll ever be, and get on my way.

I drag myself out of my car and trudge into the store only to be greeted by a cheerful soul welcoming me with a huge smile! Well, that's very nice, and I meet that person, eye to eye, and express thanks with a big smile of my own. Already I feel my spirit lifting.

Since the pandemic, most places are short-staffed, and I hesitate to ask for help, knowing that I might annoy an employee and possibly put added stress. Sometimes I am treated as if I am, indeed, an annoyance, and I receive no help; but sometimes the employee goes above and beyond to give me aid, and I am touched by this. And now, my trudging steps are now lighter.

Feeling "the love" now, I try to engage a fellow customer with a smile or a word or two, knowing that my attempt may be ignored. It often is ignored, but then an aisle or two over there is a connection, and my heart leaps with actual joy! A fellow human reacts in kind, and the world is suddenly a kinder, gentler place. The world, outside my door, suddenly lifts me up, and I can't keep from smiling.

For me, these are all acts of Good Samaritans. It doesn't have to be saving a life or something quite so major. Someone acting with compassion to lighten someone's load is the definition of a Good Samaritan.

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Load Lightener

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Another task I struggle with is having to call customer service. I dread it like the plague. Minutes mount while waiting for that maddening music to end and for a human to actually answer, and I would wager that four out of five calls end with no satisfaction. But, oh that fifth call, when an angel appears on the line and aid is rendered, cheerfully – that is the best feeling in the world.

My daughter has such a job, and the stories she has shared make me so proud of her. It just occurred to me that she has never shared a story about dealing with a difficult client – that alone says a lot about her! After helping an elderly man understand some of the new benefits he had questions about, she was told by him that he would meet her in heaven for being kind to an old man. Another woman she helped asked her if she

could say a prayer for her. During the prayer, she thanked God for all of the angels in the world who are kind, thoughtful, and patient with the elderly. It made my daughter cry.

I wish everyone who has the difficult job of customer service knew just how important their work is. In that job capacity, they are a gift to people in need of a Good Samaritan – a compassionate person to lighten their load.

Lucky for me, there are many kind and gentle souls in the world who, for me, are Good Samaritans. I just have to think positively when I do have to enter the world and keep my eye out for these angels on earth because they always lighten my load.



Learning to Forgive

by Pat Browne

There was a time in my younger days when I believed that forgiveness should be granted only if, and when, the offender expressed remorse and humbly asked for it. I was so convinced of this that I set about writing a book about forgiveness with the working title, "Forgiveness My..." well, never mind the title. My initial premise was that Jesus had required remorse before He extended forgiveness, and so we should also require it. It took very little investment of time in Scriptural research to blow that theory out of the water, and swiftly; my book writing venture was ended.

Over time, I learned that forgiveness is a tricky business. I was often in need of forgiveness from my fellow humans and from my God. Asking for it was often difficult, but it was much easier when the person I had offended by word or deed offered me an open heart even before I acknowledged my fault. Extending forgiveness was even more difficult for me. It was a long time before I came to understand that the process of forgiving was actually a gift for me; that it was not about condoning the behavior of the offender, but more about releasing me from the bondage of sitting in judgment over that person. It allowed me to lay down the burden of anger and hurt. Extending an open heart to the other released us both and opened the door to healing.

I was able to come to that understanding not through my own efforts, but through the experience of someone who struggled with forgiveness even more than I did. My husband, though quick to forgive me and our children, was prone to holding grudges when he felt that someone else had offended him. But God, who has a way of softening hearts, arranged for Larry to attend a retreat where he was moved to let go of his hurt and anger. He returned home with a desire not only to forgive, but to make amends to those from whom he had withheld forgiveness beforehand. Watching him go through this transformation gave me more understanding and acceptance of the true nature and rewards of forgiveness than I could ever have gained in any other way. How lovely that God chose to lead me to greater understanding of forgiveness through my own husband's experience.

Fortunately, I have had many other mentors in forgiveness as well. One such person is my sister, Kate, who taught me, through her kind and empathetic nature, that all people are deserving of redemption and forgiveness no matter the gravity of their transgressions. As Catholics, we are blessed with the opportunity to unburden our souls and receive God's forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and during Mass as we pray for our souls to be healed before receiving Communion. The grace that leads us to a place of forgiveness, on either side of the equation, is truly an amazing grace, and one for which I am most grateful.



Jubilee Year/Forgiveness

by Mark Hudson

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As of 7:00 PM on Christmas Eve, the Catholic Church began a Jubilee year. This began with the rite of the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican immediately before Pope Francis celebrated midnight Mass. Holy Doors are also opened at Rome's three other major basilicas: St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul's Outside the Walls.

On December 10, 2024, Maia Wiering wrote in *America Magazine*: "The doors represent the passage to salvation Jesus opened to humanity. In 1423, Pope Martin V opened the Holy Door in the Basilica of St. John Lateran — the Diocese of Rome's cathedral — for the first time for a jubilee. For the Holy Year of 1500, Pope Alexander VI opened Holy Doors at Rome's four main basilicas. At the end of a holy year, the Holy Doors are formally closed and then bricked over by masons."

Jubilee years have been held on regular intervals in the Catholic Church since 1300, but they trace their roots to the Jewish tradition of marking a Jubilee year every 50 years. A Jubilee year, also known as a "holy year," is a special year in the life of the Church currently celebrated every 25 years.

These years in Jewish history were significant. As again noted in the previous article from *America Magazine*, they were "intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields."

The Lourdes Word committee would like to say this Jubilee Year is why the theme of forgiveness was chosen for this issue. Actually, for full disclosure, it was a coincidence. Perhaps the Holy Spirit again was working in its mysterious ways.

Forgiveness is one of the most difficult tasks we are called to practice. I find it no coincidence that in the anonymous prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, forgiveness (pardon) is mentioned twice. At the beginning of the supplication, we are requesting that when we are injured, to pardon. Then in the concluding paragraph, the prayer again addresses forgiveness. "It is in forgiving that one is forgiven." In the Our Father, we ask God to "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Let us join the Church and Jewish history establishing a proper relationship with God, and with one another. May this be our impetus in forgiveness not only in this Jubilee Year, but in the days and years to come.

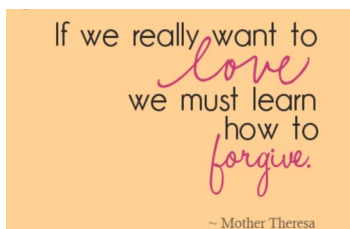


When I first discovered the topic for the Winter 2025 issue of *The Lourdes Word* would be “forgiveness,” I began pondering its importance. I discussed forgiveness with a wise friend, and he provided me with these thoughts from Deacon J. Peter Nixon, which originally were printed in the *Give Us This Day* devotional booklet.

I found these thoughts helpful. So I wanted to share them below:

Bearing the Weight

“The advice columnist Ann Landers once famously wrote that ‘hanging onto resentment is letting someone you despise live rent-free in your head.’ Anyone who has struggled to forgive a serious wrong knows there is certainly wisdom here. At the same time, it risks reducing forgiveness to something we do primarily for ourselves and our own spiritual or emotional growth.



Jesus' conception of forgiveness in [the] Gospel is more relational. He is counseling his disciples, those who are following him together in community. In any stable community, the ongoing practice of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation is necessary to keep it from falling apart. 'Things that cause sin occur.' Sin is serious. Sin is damaging. But we who are bound together in Christ know that sin does not have the last word: 'If your brother sins, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him.'

But even for those committed to the path of Christian discipleship, the call to forgive endlessly can sometimes seem a bridge too far. It may help to remind ourselves that forgiveness does not mean denying the wrong was done. Indeed, forgiveness would be pointless if there was no wrong to forgive. In the end, though, we cannot reject the possibility of forgiveness for others without rejecting it for ourselves. For all of us, without exception, bear the weight of that millstone, and all of us pray that we might be saved from the sea.”



If you enjoy writing and would like to submit an article, poem, etc., then please see the last page of this publication.

Help from the Holy Spirit

by Anonymous

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The first thing I need to say—right up front—is that I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. One thing that has helped me to survive is many years of excellent therapy.

My first therapist had several unique exercises to help me get in touch with my inner self. The very first one was to take people in my life – including myself – and to write 70 times for 7 days: “I forgive _____ for what was done to me.” I completely trusted this therapist, and although it might sound rather tedious, I did it.

The last writing assignment was to forgive God. “I forgive God for everything I thought God did to me.” It seemed weird to me that I was forgiving God. After all, I had prayed my whole life for God to forgive me. But of course, I did the assignment because I trusted my therapist.

Another aspect of my recovery was that I knew that my therapist prayed the Rosary every day. Until that point, I was fairly unfamiliar with the Rosary, but somehow I felt that it would give me comfort. She gave me a little pamphlet, and I started praying the prayers and attempting to ponder the mysteries for each day.

Recovery from trauma such as sexual abuse has several stages, similar to grieving. One of the stages is ANGER. In reading the stories of others in situations similar to mine, I read that some people get stuck in the anger stage. They use the anger to propel themselves through each day.

As time progressed, I found that my relationship with

God deepened. My perspective on my life started to change, and I became more aware of certain aspects of the Scriptures.

I realized one day that when Jesus taught us to pray, He instructed us to “forgive those who have trespassed against us.” And because I had been praying the Rosary, I said those words several times each day. Those words began to take on a new meaning.

Through an elderly priest friend, I became familiar with Jesus’ Seven Last Words from the Cross. In the very first one, He asked His Father to forgive us. This reinforced in my heart and mind that for me, forgiveness was imperative.

I had a choice to make. Should I remain angry and use this anger to help me get through each day? Or should I try to forgive?

After a while, it became clear to me that forgiveness was the only way for me to become a completely functional human being. I would have to forgive those who had hurt me.

This is not to say that I consider myself better than anyone who feels the need to stay in “anger mode.” We each must decide for ourselves whether or not forgiveness is possible.

And as I look back on the events of my life, I realize that I cannot take credit for my ability to forgive. It has become abundantly clear to me that I owe it all to the working of the Holy Spirit. I am very grateful for it.



If We Knew

by Linda Abner

PAGE 7

If we knew the harm our careless words
And misled deeds might cause
Would we temper them more carefully
Think again, and pause?

If we knew the tangled portent
Of misunderstanding Why
Would we hasten to amend our ways
Seek to clarify?

Or would we hoard an injury
Let resentment have its way?
Destroying possibility
As devils come to play

So much is lost
As time slips by
When we choose silence
As our ally.

Opportunities missed
Precious memories not made
On the altars of mortal
Perception, laid

If we knew the deepening sorrow
Grown from choosing to withdraw
Would we question our own certainty
Or even care at all?

Or if we reconsidered
And yearned to rectify
A dispossessed relationship
Would we even try?

When hope seems lost and we concede
To numbing apathy
No less a death than physical
Is left to mourn and grieve

If we knew the Power that waits
To help us do what we can't do
Would we grasp its hand, forgive and
Be forgiven - if we knew?



Eyes of Our Heart

by Andrea Fleak

I have a podcast I listen to every morning during my drive to work called, “The God Minute.” It is a prayer podcast based out of Missouri that some Vincentian priests and lay people started. Formatted similarly to the Liturgy of the Hours, it includes instrumental music, a psalm reading, another scripture passage, a reflection by someone on the “team,” and the Lord’s Prayer.

One morning, as I was driving to work, the message God gave me during my prayer time was one that I wasn’t prepared for—one that challenged my perspective. The podcast began as it always does, with beautiful instrumental music, a psalm, and then a reading from 1 Peter 1:22. The reflection discussed how we are called to love others, even when we disagree with them because we cannot truly adore God without loving each other. We need to strive to see like God, and to do that, we must look with the eyes of our hearts. It reminded listeners that the person we disagree with—or who has hurt us—is also God’s baby.



That morning, this was not the message I wanted to hear. My heart was hurting; I was angry, scared, and confused. When I turned the podcast on, I hoped to find words of comfort, something to encourage me

for the day ahead, and not a challenge to love others—especially those responsible for my hurting heart. And yet, that was exactly what God placed before me that day and in the days to come.

The acts of forgiveness and reconciliation are counter

cultural. In our society, we often see division and hear angry words or name-calling, but far less frequent are conversations leading to reconciliation. Too often, we hear of disagreements escalating into violence. On television shows and movies, revenge or retaliation is often portrayed as an acceptable response to being wronged. Jesus knew when commending us to forgive others that this act of forgiveness and rational love was against the norm and our own human nature. In Luke 6:27, Jesus goes so far as to say, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” And when asked how often we should forgive, He tells us in Matthew 18:21 not just seven times, but seventy times seven. This “seventy times seven” symbolizes that our forgiving should be without limits. Ultimately, Jesus gave us the greatest example of forgiving others from the cross as He was dying saying, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.(Lk23:34)”

Thinking back to that day in my car and listening to the reflection, the phrase “God’s baby” moved something in me. Looking at someone as God’s baby, especially someone you don’t care for or who has hurt you, makes you see that person as human. It is a reminder that there are people who care for that individual and, more importantly, God loves that person. It challenges our next actions to be of shared dialogue or at least not be ones of revenge or retaliation.

The act of forgiving is hard. Choosing to see others as God’s baby is hard. Yet, we know from the cross that God is love. If we are going to love God deeper, then we need to see like God sees and look from the eyes of our hearts.



Forgiveness—A Blessing in Disguise

by Michele Oertel

Jesus our Savior teaches us how to pray, while He also teaches us to forgive. The Lord's Prayer, that we likely learned early in our childhood and religiously say at every Mass, is the crux of life!

The Lords Prayer

**Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever.
*Amen***

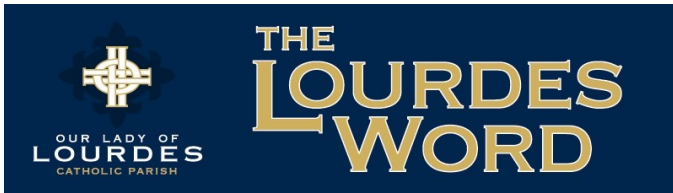
This beautiful rote prayer can be taken for granted, yet every single word is a powerful reminder of our human needs and divine intervention. What is perplexing is how it has taken me so many years into my adult life to comprehend the need for His loving instruction. While I believe I have grasped His forgiveness of our sins, the concept of our forgiveness of others' sins was somewhat lost on me beyond accepting apologies. The simple word "as" from His model prayer above is what hit home. Yikes-- asking the Lord to forgive us *as* we (with our human frailties of pride, anger, resentment, bitterness, etc.) forgive others gave me pause. I certainly don't want God to forgive in such a weak, human manner.

In Matthew 18:21-22, the reference to "seventy times seven" is about ongoing forgiveness -- minute by minute, day by day, step by step. I've learned that forgiveness is a choice and a process only achievable by the grace of God. Love, compassion, and grace do indeed cover a multitude of sins within our interpersonal relationships. Truly He is strong when we are weak.

The fact that we need to forgive means that life is full of sins, slights, betrayals, and hurts. Nobody really wants to go through the difficult journey of healing. And yet, eventually and ultimately with God by our side, we can become "better, not bitter" Christians. Forgiveness leads to freedom, peace, and joy in the soul.

Romans 8:28 reads, "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose." Despite challenging circumstances, trusting that God uses life's negatives ultimately to bring some sort of positives helps me see how the need for forgiveness, the choice of forgiveness, and the act (s) of forgiveness can be a blessing in disguise.





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Our quarterly publication of *The Lourdes Word* is an attempt for us, the followers of Christ, to reflect publicly on our faith journey. In this issue, readers were asked to share their thoughts on “*Forgiveness.*”



We invite the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes to submit writings which they feel will help address the theme of the next publication. All submissions will be reviewed by the publication committee. Please note that due to space requirements, editing may be necessary. Therefore, please limit your submission to 525 words or fewer. The theme for the next issue will be, “**Good-bye Father Rick—Thanks for the Memories.**” The edited copy will be returned to the author for review before final publication. Please feel free to submit writings through the parish secretary or to Mark Hudson, markchudson@gmail.com.

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