

The Pray More Advent Retreat

Inspiring talks to help you
prepare to celebrate the
birth of our Lord,
Jesus Christ



An Introduction to Forgiveness: The Sacrifice of Forgiveness

by Johnnette Benkovic

“Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil. The measure of such a decision is the love of God who draws us to himself in spite of our sin. It has its perfect exemplar in the forgiveness of Christ, who on the Cross prayed: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Lk 23:34).

- Blessed John Paul II; Message for World Day of Peace 2002

Reflective Questions

1. Johnnette shares that, “the greatest sacrifice that we can make to God is through an act of humility of forgiveness.” This is a good time to do an inventory of those individuals whom you need to forgive. Consider whether you have justified your anger towards them, and whether you’ve felt bitterness and resentment towards them. Have you played a part in the anger you carry in your heart by not forgiving them?
2. When we breed resentment and bitterness in our heart, and we allow it to grow, we become cold-hearted. This affects every relationship we have, and most importantly, our relationship with God. How have you seen how your anger or unforgiveness has affected your other relationships? Have you noticed how it has hurt your relationship with the Lord?
3. What makes you resistant to forgiveness? How can you pray about that?
4. Forgiveness is not an emotion. It is a free-will action. We choose to forgive. And it’s a choice that sets us free. How can you begin to forgive the people

who have hurt you? You don't have to make too big of steps today. But consider what sort of little steps you can take to forgive.

5. Prayer moves us and enables us to receive the grace that we need to make that free-will action of forgiveness. Johnnette gives us a few examples of how to pray for our persecutor. Which one are you able to pray?
6. Forgiveness is a process. It is often not a one-time thing. Johnnette suggests praying again and again, for our persecutor whenever ill-will rises up in our heart for them. If the person who hurt you comes to mind throughout this season of Advent, consider taking that as an opportunity to pray.

“Father God, I pray for this person who not only caused me this thrust of the wound of the heart, but also for the way in which that's affected my perception of the world and who I am in it; for the way in which it has affected the way in which I approach others; the way in which it has caused me perhaps to be rebellious in certain ways, or afraid of authority, or whatever the case may be.... I desire to forgive this person for that too. I desire to desire to forgive that person too. I desire to desire to desire to forgive that person too.”