

FROM FATHER JOHN: *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever; Give thanks to the God of gods, for his mercy endures forever; Give thanks to the LORD of lords, for his mercy endures forever. Who led his people through the wilderness, for his mercy endures forever; Who smote great kings, for his mercy endures forever; And slew powerful kings, for his mercy endures forever. And made their land a heritage, for his mercy endures forever; The heritage of Israel his servant, for his mercy endures forever; And freed us from our foes, for his mercy endures forever.” ~ Psalm 136*

His mercy endures forever!!!



So why should we forgive people? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Why should I forgive someone? Should we just forgive someone because Jesus told us to, is that the only reason? Because it's obvious Jesus wants us to forgive one another. He tells us, after all, in Matthews gospel, to forgive one another, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

“Peter approached Jesus and asked him, ‘Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?’

Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of

paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had the fellow servant put in prison until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.' When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan." (Matthew 18:21 – 19:1)

We see from the parable that our Lord Jesus wants us to forgive one another, so why should we go ahead and forgive other people. Fr. Don McLaughlin, a good friend of mine, likes to joke that he has Irish Alzheimer's Disease; he forgets everything but the grudges.

So why should we forgive people?

I think the first thing that we need to recognize is that our Lord Jesus wants us to forgive people, tells us to forgive people, encourages us to forgive people. But there's more to it than just that. The second thing we need to remember is that if we want to truly be disciples of our Lord Jesus, if we want to live out this life and grow in holiness, grow in perfection and grow closer to God, we need to do what Jesus did when he walked this earth.

And what did he do? Well, one thing he did, as he hung from the cross, was forgive his persecutors. "*Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are*

doing.” Our Lord Jesus forgave people of their sins throughout the gospel. If we think about the woman caught in adultery what did he do? He forgave her and told her to go, *“sin no more”*.

And so, Jesus forgave people, so if we want to live an imitation of him, we too should forgive people.

So how do we forgive 77 times? First, we start with prayer. If we’re going to forgive people, truly forgive them, we need to pray to God, asking for the grace to help us forgive someone; to let go of the pain and the suffering and the hurt, whatever it might be that’s holding us back from forgiving someone.

The other thing we need to remember is that when we’re unable to forgive people, it’s usually because we’re focused inward, we’re focused on our self, we’re focused inward on what hurt us, what we’re going through, what harm was done to us, our family. We’re not focused outwards towards God, we’re focused inward to ourselves, our own desires, our own wants, our own pain, our own suffering rather than focusing on God and what God wants us to do.

When we forgive, we change that focus. We focus on the good of the other person. We focus on God, on what God desires for us and that’s always a good move in the spiritual life.

But I think the most important reason is simply this. There’s an old saying, ***“To err is human, to forgive is divine.”***

It’s not really part of our fallen human nature to forgive others. It’s something we lost in the fall. That’s where the joke about the grudges comes in. It’s not really in our nature to easily forgive people. But, it’s God’s nature to forgive. It’s the divine nature of God to forgive each and every single one of us, to forgive humanity for its sins. That’s why He sent His only begotten Son into the world; to forgive us and save us from our sins.

Forgiving us is part of the divine nature of God. When we forgive someone, we’re sharing in the divine nature of God. We’re taking the nature of God, how God is, and changing our nature to be like His nature. Always remember, when we forgive someone, we’re sharing in the divine nature of God, we sharing in the

divinity of God right here, right now. And that's a beautiful and glorious thing we get to do when we forgive someone.

So I started with why should we forgive other people? And why does our Lord Jesus want us to forgive other people? And I gave you some reasons there, but the biggest thing, when you sum it all up, if you put it all under umbrella, the reason our Lord Jesus wants us to forgive people is because it's for our own good. And, our Lord Jesus always wants what's good for us.

It's good for us whenever we forgive someone who has sinned against us. It's good for us whenever we let go of the grudges and forgive because we share in the divine nature; we act as Christ Jesus acted in the world. We grow in holiness. We receive grace upon grace upon grace because without that grace, we could never forgive someone. And so, it's in our own best interest to forgive people who have hurt us especially if they're members of our own family. Our Lord Jesus Christ asks us to forgive one another seventy-seven times because He always wants what's best for us.

May God bless you and all those who love the Lord!

