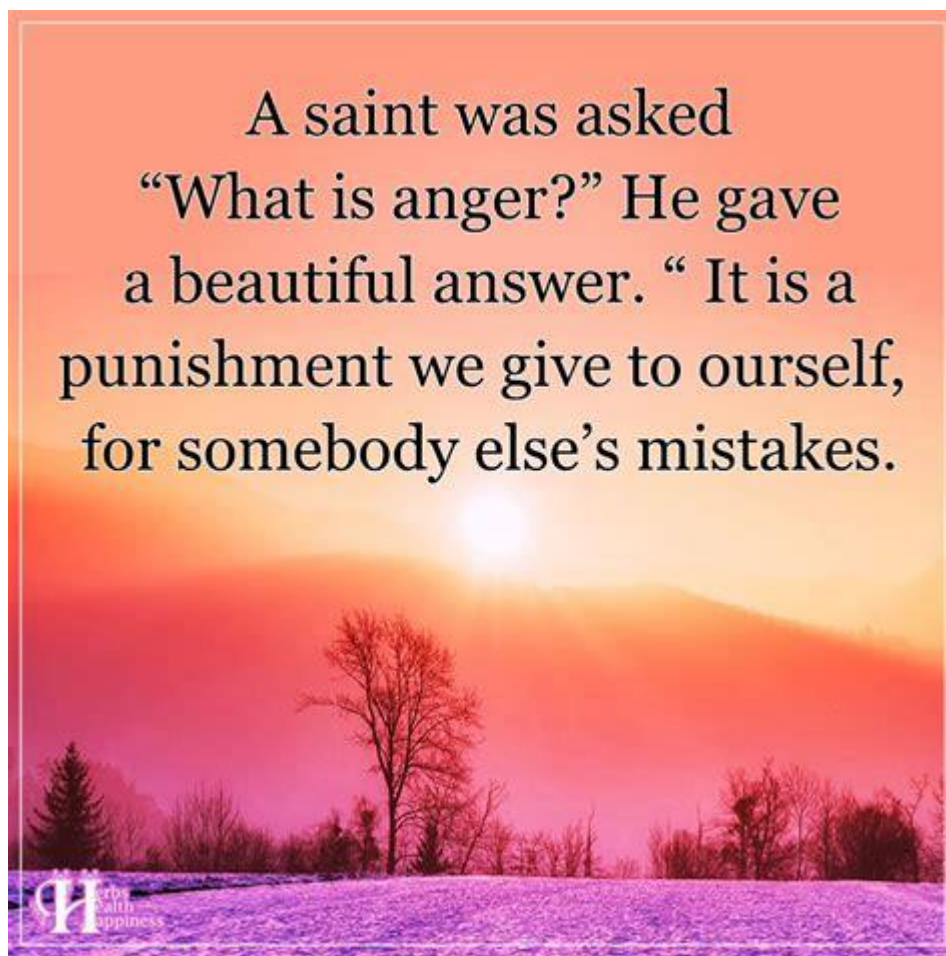


**FROM FATHER JOHN:** *"Incline your ear, LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and oppressed. Preserve my life, for I am devoted; save your servant who trusts in you. You are my God; be gracious to me, Lord; to you I call all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant; to you, Lord, I lift up my soul. Lord, you are good and forgiving, most merciful to all who call on you. LORD, hear my prayer; listen to my cry for help. On the day of my distress I call to you, for you will answer me."* ~ Psalm 86

***Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy!!!***



As a child, I always found the story of Jonah to be one that was exciting and full of wonder and awe. I imagine it was because I usually focused on Jonah getting swallowed up by the whale. But, there is a great spiritual Truth we can learn from Jonah.

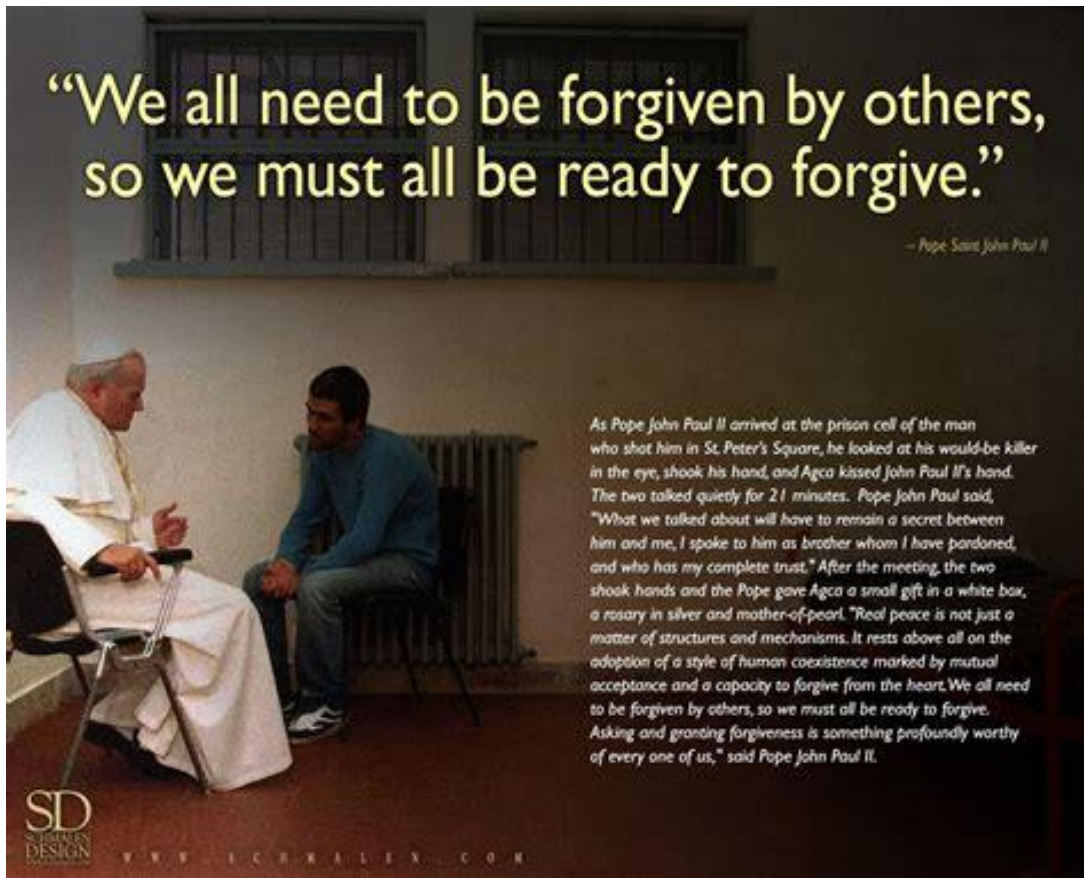
*“Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry that God did not carry out the evil he threatened against Nineveh. He prayed, ‘I beseech you, LORD, is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? This is why I fled at first to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, rich in clemency, loath to punish. And now, LORD, please take my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.’*

*But the LORD asked, ‘Have you reason to be angry?’ Jonah then left the city for a place to the east of it, where he built himself a hut and waited under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city. And when the LORD God provided a gourd plant that grew up over Jonah’s head, giving shade that relieved him of any discomfort, Jonah was very happy over the plant.*

*But the next morning at dawn God sent a worm that attacked the plant, so that it withered. And when the sun arose, God sent a burning east wind; and the sun beat upon Jonah’s head till he became faint. Then Jonah asked for death, saying, ‘I would be better off dead than alive.’*

*But God said to Jonah, ‘Have you reason to be angry over the plant?’ ‘I have reason to be angry,’ Jonah answered, ‘angry enough to die.’*

*Then the LORD said, ‘You are concerned over the plant which cost you no labor and which you did not raise; it came up in one night and in one night it perished. And should I not be concerned over Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot distinguish their right hand from their left, not to mention the many cattle?’” (Jonah 4:1 – 11)*



Jonah tries disobey God and to run away from Him. And in that process Jonah suffers greatly, even being swallowed up by a whale. He finally obeys God and then goes off sulking when God didn't do what he expected. You see, for Jonah, his relationship with God was all about himself and what he wanted rather than about God's will and God's mercy and compassion.

The story actually ends happily. Nineveh is saved!

But, that's not what Jonah wanted. He wanted Nineveh destroyed. The scripture above begins with, ***“Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry that God did not carry out the evil he threatened against Nineveh.”***

Jonah went through a lot before he finally obeyed God. The punishment he endured was great. But, unfortunately, he was focused on his own suffering and his anger toward the Ninevites. Then God went ahead and forgave the Ninevites. After all the trouble he had gone through, God had not done what Jonah wanted.

The interesting thing to see when we see Jonah's anger is that his anger made him absolutely miserable. So much so, that he told God that he wanted to die. ***"Then Jonah asked for death, saying, 'I would be better off dead than alive.'"***

St. Augustine wrote that *"to withhold forgiveness is to take poison and expect the unforgiven to die."* It's obvious from both our readings today, and from the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus that God our Father wants us to forgive one another. When we hold on to our anger, to our bitterness, to our frustrations, we end up being miserable just like Jonah was miserable. Being angry and bitter with others does not help us nor does it bring us any real happiness or joy.

It's when we accept God's will and forgive one another that we find the burden of anger lifted from our heart and our soul. And that's one of the keys to living a life of discipleship and growing spiritually and in our relationship with our Lord Jesus. We need to let go of the anger and forgive others because our anger is a heavy burden on our heart and our soul.

And once the anger and bitterness is lifted, we are able to find great joy, the Joy our Lord and God intends us to have. I looked up what the opposite of anger was in an online Thesaurus. What I found were words like Happiness, Calm, Peace, Delight, Love and Joy.

I think the lesson that Jonah gives us is that anger leads to misery, our misery, but when we let go of the anger, the bitterness and the

frustration we grow spiritually, we grow as disciples of our Lord Jesus and we find the graces and blessings that God wants us to have, namely, Happiness, Calm, Peace, Delight, Love and Joy.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.

