



Reflection 10

FOLLOWING CLELIA'S FOOTSTEPS
TOWARD THE HEART OF JESUS

FORGIVENESS MAKES A FAMILY BEAUTIFUL

Forgive others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, our family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but rather one of constant tension and mutual criticism. (cf. Amoris Laetitia, 108)

LUKE 7:36-50

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give

me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Reflection: Forgiveness heals

One of the greatest obstacles to true Christian living is the lack of forgiveness. Forgiveness enables us to love and to grow, reconciles us with others, heals body and spirit. Forgiveness is the source of healing: it heals the wounds of resentment, renews persons, marriages, families, communities, life in society. It is key to our relationship with God, others, and ourselves. Forgiveness is a decision. It is not a feeling, but an act of our will. I decide to forgive even if I don't feel like it. It is the choice to love others as they are. Forgiveness is a way of life: the way of life of the Christian who forgives always and everyone, for everything.

It is impossible to forgive others if first we do not forgive ourselves. To forgive ourselves means to accept ourselves in all the aspects of our lives: spiritual, psychological, physical, and social. It means believing that Jesus pardons every weakness, every mistake, and thus giving the feeling of guilt no more reason to exist.

... We cannot demand God's forgiveness for ourselves if we in turn do not grant forgiveness to our neighbour. Even in families. How many disunited families, who do not know how to forgive each other. How many brothers and sisters bear this resentment within. **It is necessary to apply merciful love to all human relationships:** between spouses, between parents and children, within our communities, in the Church and also in society and

politics. *we are called to forgive always!* (cf. Angelus, September 13, 2020, Pope Francis)

AMORIS LAETITIA

When we have been offended or let down, forgiveness is possible and desirable, but no one can say that it is easy. The truth is that “family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation. There is no family that does not know how selfishness, discord, tension and conflict violently attack and at times mortally wound its own communion: hence there arise the many and varied forms of division in family life.” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 106)

Today we recognize that being able to forgive others implies the liberating experience of understanding and forgiving ourselves. Often our mistakes, or criticism we have received from loved ones, can lead to a loss of self-esteem. We become distant from others, avoiding affection and fearful in our interpersonal relationships. Blaming others becomes falsely reassuring. We need to learn to pray over our past history, to accept ourselves, to learn how to live with our limitations, and even to forgive ourselves, in order to have this same attitude towards others. (*Amoris Laetitia*, 107)

All this assumes that we ourselves have had the experience of being forgiven by God, justified by his grace and not by our own merits. We have known a love that is prior to any of our own efforts, a love that constantly opens doors, promotes and encourages. If we accept that God’s love is unconditional, that the Father’s love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us. Otherwise, our family life will no longer be a place of understanding, support and encouragement, but rather one of constant tension and mutual criticism. (*Amoris Laetitia*, 108)

Mother Clelia

Jesus not only wants me to forgive from my heart all the wrongs received from my offenders, but to seek to do them as much good as possible, especially to pray much for them, to compassionate with them and to excuse them, desiring that they too take part in His heavenly glory. He wants me to pray always for those who are the cause of my suffering, never speaking of their faults. He wants me to love those who have offended me, as He has loved us. (*Diary*)

PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

Lord Jesus, send me your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and forgiveness, that he may sustain me and give me the strength to forgive all, as you forgive.

I pray especially for the grace to forgive those who have hurt me most. I give them to you, Lord. You know that I am unable to forgive them! With your help, Lord, I wish to forgive them now from my heart and I pray that you will bless them.

Lord Jesus Christ, I ask you today for the ability to forgive all the people in my life. I thank you for loving me.

Action:

- Make an examination of conscience to see how forgiveness is operative in your life--with family, relatives, friends, myself. Make the decision to forgive with all your heart, recalling the words of Jesus that if we forgive, we will be forgiven by Him.

*Adopt forgiveness and mercy as a way of
life* (Pope Francis)

