

## Tuesday of Lent Week 4



I was talking to someone about another person who had offended her. She said 'I can get on with her now alright. But I will never forgive her'. It was revealing: the 'will never', rather than 'can't ever'.

I was struck by the sense of defiance even of pride in that resolution never to forgive. It was as if she knew she had the ability to forgive, let go and move on. But, for whatever reason she preferred to stay with the bittersweet chemistry of resentment and anger.

Maybe it brings us a satisfying sense of moral superiority? 'I am the offended party so I am always in the right as long as I act out of that resentment'. Maybe too there isn't as much freedom in the choice not to forgive as we might think.

Why on earth would we prefer the pain and negativity of the past than to grow through it and move on with the balm of wisdom, compassion and new depth? No good reason; and yet we can always find reasons. Whoever did something consciously bad without building a defence or justification for it?

It is always easy to dress up the irrational and self-destructive as rational and healthy. Allowing anger and resentment to cling to us, however, merely obscures who we are and diminishes what we are capable of becoming. In the person I was with I sensed this contraction. Her remark? accompanied by a slightly crazy, if not demonic look in her eyes - was an expression not of badness but of diminished responsibility.

Like the younger son in the parable, when we indulge ourselves and then get sick on excess we think we deserve to be punished? by our bodies or other people or by God. It seems we don't deserve to be forgiven and restored to the relationship we have offended. Not surprisingly, we apply the same primitive standard of justice to others. The measure we give to ourselves will be the measure we give to others.

In fact - as every meditation can reveal to us - love is boundless and overflowing. Forgiveness

is on tap. ?The kingdom of heaven is close at hand? ? the refrain of each day of Lent.

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