

August 14, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

FORGIVENESS

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Today's Gospel Acclamation and Gospel

*God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

2 CORINTHIANS 5:19

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Reflection

Reconciliation... Unity... Forgiveness... Listening... God reconciling the world to himself in Christ... Mercy! These are the words that keep ringing in my head. As I read these Scripture passages again, I think about the current situations around us. The war in Ukraine that has been going on since 2022; the Israeli-Palestinian war in Gaza; the wars that had been going on in that part of the world since the beginning of time; the political divisiveness in the US; the reaction to a controversial part of the Olympics' Opening Ceremony; factions and dissensions in families, among friends, and in various groups. I also think about St. Maximilian Kolbe, whose feast day we celebrate today. **Where is reconciliation and forgiveness in all this?**

The words of Jesus, spoken during his last moments on the cross, echo in my mind: **"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."** (Luke 23:34) This brings to mind these verses: **"God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."** (2 Cor 5:19)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." (John 3:16)

What is it in forgiveness that makes it so hard for us to give it? How is it easy for Jesus and not for us? Some might say it was easy for Jesus because of his divinity. But remember, Jesus was also fully human, meaning he had the same emotions we have -- although he overcame them.

We fear, we are embarrassed, we are triggered. Sometimes our heads swim with laughter, applause, accolades, and thoughts that we are great -- and our conscience is drowned, the Center of our being that tells us to recognize where we came from, who we are, and what we are about. Then we walk away from the real presence of God in us and let ourselves be misguided.

How is it easy for Maximilian Kolbe and not for us? Was he a natural in forgiving? Do some have forgiveness built-in, inherent in them? Thinking of St. Maximilian Kolbe calmly giving up himself to be executed in Auschwitz as a substitute for a man with a family, I see someone selfless, void of ego. I see someone rooted in the Scriptures, the Words of Jesus whom he follows. I see someone who loves the God he follows and thus, loves the people around him. I see someone who must have practiced forgiveness so many times during his priesthood, even practicing daily, someone who heard confessions and forgave

many. I see someone who accepted the truth that he was forgiven and, in believing, knew that it was a gift that must be passed on. I see someone who always prayed the Our Father, the prayer Jesus taught us, and meant every word, especially **“forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”**

It seems to me that for us to become forgiving persons, we ought to be humble, empty of our egos, looking beyond ourselves, with much devotion to the Word of God, listening attentively to God’s voice within, and loving God and the dear neighbor much. It takes practice. I speak of that humility that says I am nothing without God’s grace, the grace that helps me put the words of God into action. It is that humility that helps me to approach the person I have offended and acknowledge my wrong and ask for forgiveness. It is that humility that recognizes God forgave me not because I repented, but because God loves me.

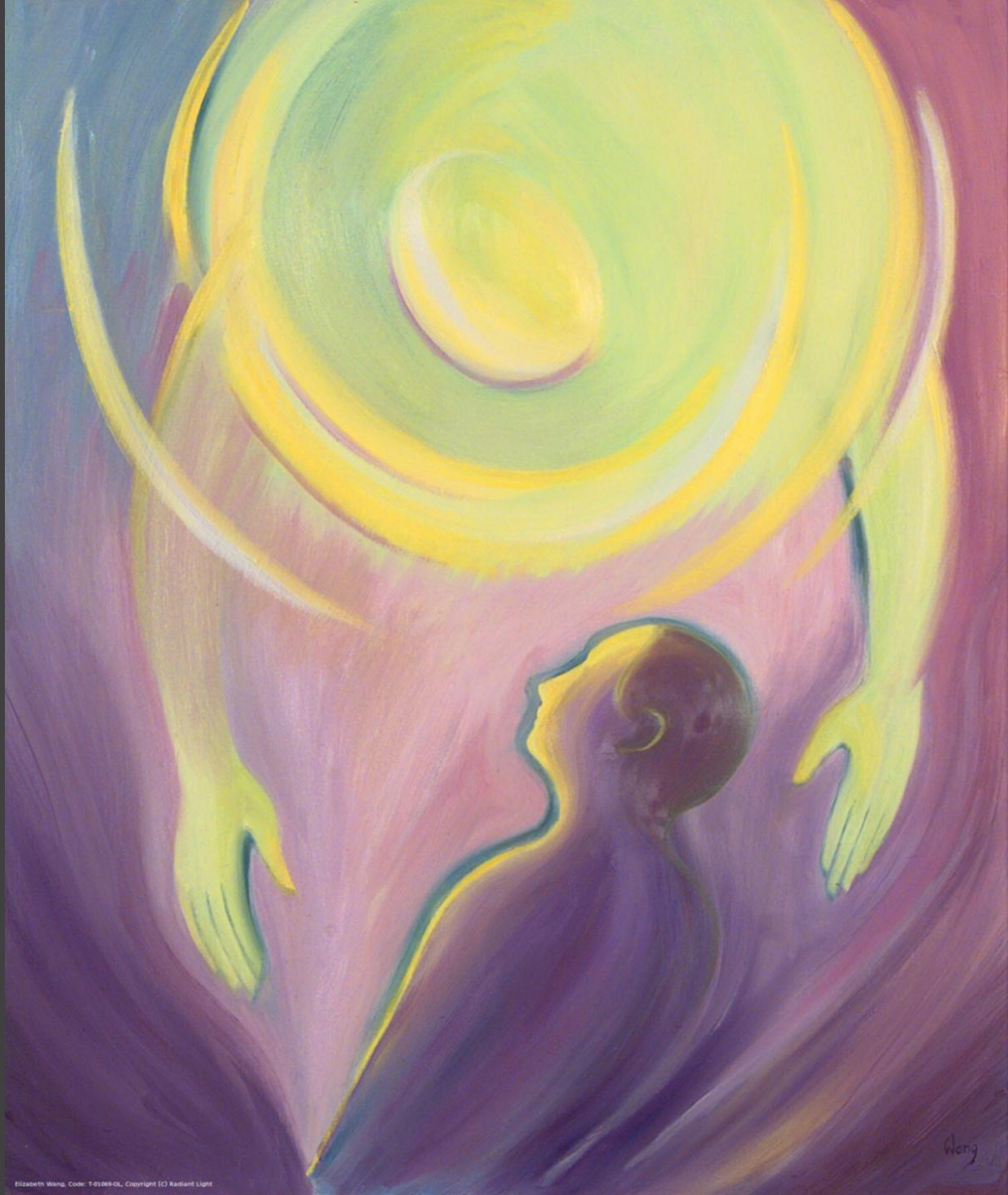


Illustration by Elizabeth Wang, T-01069-OL-v2, 'Whenever we repent of our sins, God the Father embraces us in a swift movement of forgiveness', copyright © Radiant Light 2006, www.radiantlight.org.uk

For Pondering

- Read today's readings two or three times. How do they resonate to you? What feelings or situations surface in your mind? I encourage you to select two of them and sit and pray about them. What is Jesus inviting you to do with them?
 - When have you been a forgiving person?
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For Prayer

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels,
yet do not have love, I am but a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge,
and if I have a faith that can move mountains,
but do not have love, I am nothing.
If I give all I possess to the poor
and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,
but do not have love, I gain nothing.
Love is patient; love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.,
Love never fails.*

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-8

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