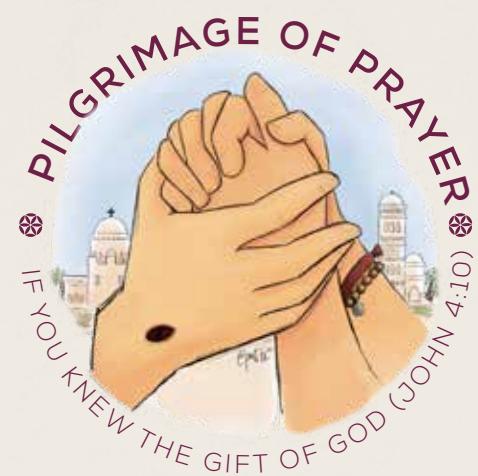


Day 43

Petitions of the Our Father

For Personal Reflection & Prayer



- Recall a situation when you had to consciously forgive someone who had hurt you. Reflect on how you felt when you were finally were able to forgive that person.
- How have you been able to express love for and to someone you had to forgive? Whom else do you need to forgive at this time in your life?

Take these considerations to the Lord in prayer, asking for light and strength.

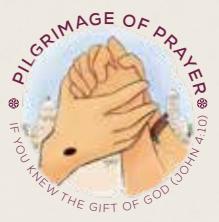
Offer a prayer inspired by the words of Scripture:

*Let your love for one another be intense,
Because love covers a multitude of sins.*

1 Peter 4:8

Pope Benedict XVI on the Meaning of Our Daily Bread

...Jesus... prays the first one immediately after being nailed to the Cross, while the soldiers are dividing his garments between them as a wretched reward for their service. In a certain sense the process of the Crucifixion ends with this action. St Luke writes: "When they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'. And they cast lots and to divide his garments" (23:33-34).



The first prayer that Jesus addresses to the Father is a prayer of intercession; he asks for forgiveness for his executioners. By so doing, Jesus is doing in person what he had taught in the Sermon on the Mount when he said: "I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Lk 6:27); and he had also promised to those who are able to forgive: "your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High" (v. 35). Now, from the Cross he not only pardons his executioners, but he addresses the Father directly, interceding for them.

Jesus' attitude finds a moving "imitation" in the account of the stoning of St Stephen, the first martyr. Indeed Stephen, now nearing his end, "knelt down and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them'. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:60): these were his last words. The comparison between Jesus' prayer for forgiveness and that of the protomartyr is significant. St Stephen turns to the Risen Lord and requests that his killing — an action described clearly by the words "this sin" — not be held against those who stoned him.

Jesus on the Cross addresses the Father and not only asks forgiveness for those who crucify him but also offers an interpretation of what is happening. According to what he says, in fact, the men who are crucifying him "know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). He therefore postulates ignorance, "not knowing", as a reason for his request for the Father's forgiveness, because it leaves the door open to conversion, as, moreover, happens in the words that the centurion was to speak at Jesus' death: "Certainly this man was innocent" (v. 47), he was the Son of God. "It remains a source of comfort for all times and for all people that both in the case of those who genuinely did not know (his executioners) and in the case of those who did know (the people who condemned him), the Lord makes ignorance the motive for his plea for forgiveness: he sees it as a door that can open us to conversion" (Jesus of Nazareth, II, [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011], p. 208)...

Dear brothers and sisters, the words of Jesus on the Cross at the last moments of his earthly life offer us demanding instructions for our prayers, but they also open us to serene trust and firm hope. Jesus, who asks the Father to forgive those who are crucifying him, invites us to take the difficult step of also praying for those who wrong us, who have injured us, ever able to forgive, so that God's light may illuminate their hearts; and he invites us to live in our prayers the same attitude of mercy and love with which God treats us; "forgive us our trespasses and forgive those who trespass against us", we say every day in the Lord's prayer.

At the same time, Jesus, who at the supreme moment of death entrusts himself totally to the hands of God the Father, communicates to us the certainty that, however harsh



the trial, however difficult the problems, however acute the suffering may be, we shall never fall from God's hands, those hands that created us, that sustain us and that accompany us on our way through life, because they are guided by an infinite and faithful love....

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120215.html

