

# Forgiveness is essential to a life lived in love

*Forgiveness is a strength you must actually pray for.  
Forgiveness means, I behave in a nonhostile way.*

by **Brendan MacCarthaigh**

Experientially, *forgiveness* is impossible. Books and movies extol revenge. Think of it - maybe it is your own life experience: A '*friend*' has raped your wife, your daughter, a teacher has misbehaved with your son, an '*uncle*' you trusted has swindled you out of possessions or property, a '*friend*' has spread the lie that you have abused youngsters sexually, you have accepted a bribe to destroy some innocent acquaintance's business, you have yourself exploited some woman's/man's loneliness to win favours of whatever sort, you've cheated on your spouse, and so on. You are being asked to forgive others for really serious damaging behaviour, or - even more difficult - to forgive yourself for really nasty things you did to others. And are being asked, just because this writer says that life means love, and that such an interpretation of life is the only valid one there is, and so you are told, forgive - or be meaningless. Worse: Be *wrong*.



Am I going to say all this to the victims of the present war in Ukraine? Am I going to say all this to the wives and children of men sent out to almost certain suffering and death in the battle zones of their conflict? Am I going to say this to the conscripts on the Russian side who never wanted to get into this wretched kill-or-be-killed scenario happening right now? Forgive? Does this guy even begin to understand what he's talking about?

Wouldn't I love to say, there is a limit to forgiveness! To say, well, major injuries you can except. To say, at a certain point, it's ok to not forgive. Look how popular I would

be, basking as a guru and enlightened promoter of truth and love. The guru said you don't have to forgive the terrible things that have happened to - or by - you, are happening perhaps right now - let your hate go on, it's ok.

You take refuge perhaps in the wretched identification of '*forgive*' with '*forget*'. "*I'll forgive but I won't forget*" - or worse still, since I can't forget I can't forgive.

### **Jesus Christ, a model of incredible forgiveness**

Of course you won't forget, you're still bleeding. That you take the offender to court is not the same as non-forgiveness. Of course, use Law to see that justice is done. In a movie "*The red and the black*" is I think the name, the Nazi officer, who has tortured and even executed many Italian rebels, is finally jailed by his Italian adversary, but the same adversary is the one who visits the German in his cell many times to reassure him that his family are still safe. It is a strong comment on forgiveness.

In my experience it is a strength you must actually pray for. Yes, I mean that. I am not 100% sure what prayer means, but part of it is the pushing of your mental, inner, attitude from revenge to understanding. He was wrong to rape my daughter - absolutely. I want to kill him. Of course. But - and this is where that strange thing called prayer plays its part - it won't unrape her. It won't actually accomplish anything. What can I do to lessen the pain for her, yes of course. The guy is a total sob, ok. But killing him or getting revenge - nothing is accomplished. Sue him? Oh yes, the Law will somehow see justice done. Not great, but something. But then have I the funds to pay a lawyer? Maybe not. Maybe the lawyers here are all white and I'm not. And so on and on, dear reader. Hang on to not getting revenge. Hang on to, *Forgiveness means, I behave in a nonhostile way*. Choosing this as your *modus operandi* requires heroism, of course, and may not be possible for quite a while. Hang in there. You are already heroic.

A great book, '*Charity*', is the tale told by a beautiful young gymnast Jew who was tortured and abused in Nazi jails and left for dead after years of suffering, and then goes round the world at the invitation of her very torturers (and others of course) preaching forgiveness. She was practising what she preached.

I happen to have as my life model a young man called Jesus Christ. I don't love him because I am a Christian - but because he inspires me by his incredible forgiveness of the murderers who tortured him to death. You may have your own models - they do help.

No, not easy. But love is like that, it's not a lollipop. But it's the only thing that makes sense. Sense means God. God means Love. Cosmic Love.

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