

## scheda 11.3

# Forgive Those who Offend Us ... My Beloved Poor

**TO FORGIVE** means letting go of resentment and revenge towards those who offend or harm us.

**TO FORGIVE** means pardoning, excusing, not condemning, being benevolent, giving to others something that in reality one would expect from him and therefore it is not absolutely due to him.

**TO OFFEND** means to insult, to wound and to upset. Many things may offend us and cause us pain. It may be an injurious word which re-opens old wounds in us. The offense may also consist in ignoring the other person. The other person does not pay us the least attention. He/she acts as if we do not exist. The person who insults us, speaks behind our back, makes us ridiculous in front of others. The one who treats us in a disgusting and unjust way, who underestimates us and excludes us, greatly offends us.

Sometimes people assume the part of the offended person. And sometimes we attribute to them the blame of reacting as if they are the offended party who reacts to our words, in which, according to us, there is no malice. We mean the person who thinks he has been offended and we mean by this expression the person who reacts to our behaviour which we believe to be correct. Attributing to the other person the blame of being the offended person, is a subtle kind of offence.

As Christians , we have the duty to look at Jesus' example who, on the Cross, prayed to his Father saying:

**"Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing."** Lk 23:34



### What must we forgive?

We must forgive offenses in general and in particular affronts, abuses, insults, outrages, physical damage, provocations, blows, harassment and murder.

We all often make mistakes, in various ways, both against our neighbour and God, but we all wish to be understood and forgiven both by men and by God.

Our Teacher warns us:

**"The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back."** Lk 6:38

**“Father forgive us our debts as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.” Mt 6:12**

Thus the promise of forgiveness by God is bound to our willingness to forgive. But we cannot stop here. Forgiving offenses is part of the new life that has been given to us in Baptism and that is given to us again every time we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The best way of thanking Jesus when He forgives us, is to forgive all the offenses we receive.

Let these words of Jesus resound in our hearts:

**Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you.  
Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who treat you badly.  
Treat others as you would like them to treat you.  
Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.  
Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves.  
Forgive and you will be forgiven. Lk 6:27-38**

**Jesus Christ**, becoming man, presents himself with one name: **He is mercy**. Scripture says:

**The grace of God, our Saviour, appears to the whole of humanity.  
The constitutive element of God is grace and mercy.**

**“Forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in Heaven  
may forgive your failings too.” Mk 11:26**

**“Do not condemn and you will not be condemned yourselves;  
grant pardon and you will be pardoned.” Lk 6, 37**

This drastic reminder is not only addressed to each believer but this command is given to the whole Church and to the every community. Parishes, Dioceses and every other community gathered together in the name of the Lord must be the **“Father’s House”** and therefore, the **“House of Mercy and Forgiveness”**, the house where reconciliation with God and our brothers and sisters is taught and accomplished. St. Paul is clear:

**“You should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness  
and humility, gentleness and patience,  
and forgiving each other as soon as a quarrel begins.” Col 3:12-13**

The command of Jesus is the following:

**“I give you a new commandment: love one another,  
just as I have loved you.” Jn 13:34**

**Forgiving with one’s heart** does not mean forgetting what we have suffered. Wounds remain. The believer who forgives, trusts in the infinite mercy of God. The blood of Jesus heals, in time, these unpleasant memories, while the Holy Spirit gives the strength of loving our enemies. Every community should be committed to witnessing unity, mutual esteem, harmony and kindness. Every member must favour the honest and sincere encounter with various groups and the community in which they are. The Spirit blows where and how He wants but He never creates division. Therefore, let us forgive, love and welcome each other, as God forgives, loves and accepts all of us.

Jesus reminds us always to forgive our brothers and sisters. In the Our Father we pray every day:

**“If you forgive others their failings, your Heavenly Father will forgive you yours;  
but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.” Mt 6:14**

In the chapter 18 of Matthew’s Gospel, the so-called **Charter of the community** in which Matthew collected together the words of Jesus that direct our attention to living together in the community, forgiveness is the central theme. Peter asked Jesus: “Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?” And Jesus answered:

**“Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.” Mt 18:21**

**Peter thinks he is already generous if he forgives his brother seven times. But Peter’s generosity is not enough for Jesus. He expects that we forgive without measure.** Jesus reminds us of the parable of the unforgiving debtor. Jesus underlines the greatness and the smallness of the debts. In today’s money one of the debtors owed 40 million Euros, the other owed only 40 Euros. And Jesus concluded saying:

**“And that is how my Heavenly Father will deal with you  
unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.” Mt 18:35**

**The Christian community can only exist if brothers and sisters forgive each other. Forgiveness is the essential condition for living charitably together in the family, community and also one’s work place.**

## پُ How to forgive from the heart?

There are Christians who would like to forgive but are full of hatred within. They feel guilty. They would like to forgive but they do not succeed. So they still feel guilty.

Forgiveness takes place in four phases. It is impossible to forgive immediately. We must go through other phases before, so that we reach the fourth one, that is, real forgiveness.

گ **The first phase consists in allowing pain to come to the surface.** I must not make light or excuse the offence of the other person too quickly. It does not matter what he meant: he hurt me. I do not overlook my pain but I take it into consideration again and I immerse myself mentally in it.

گ **The second phase consists in admitting anger.** Anger is the force that helps me get rid of the one who wounded me. I create a healthy detachment from him. If I continue to leave the offender’s knife in the wound, forgiveness will never take place. Only then the wound may be healed. I do not need to gain his recognition. My dignity is within me. I do not depend on his judgement

گ **The third phase consists in observing, in an objective manner, what has happened during the offense.** It means understanding the offense, the offender and myself as the offended party without expressing any evaluation. I go back to think how the offense happened. I do not excuse nor accuse. I only try to understand. And only when I succeed to understand myself, I stop blaming myself because I cannot succeed to forgive.

گ **The fourth phase: real forgiveness.** Here forgiveness is positive action. I free myself from the power of the person who offended me. I free myself from negative energy which is still inside me through the offense of the other person. It could be that I may also need a long time of detachment so that forgiveness may emanate from me. We must not forgive others unwillingly, but very willingly. **Willingly means that I would like to forgive whole heartedly. Often there is need of much before forgiveness enters my heart.**

## پ **Other considerations on Poverty ...**

This perspective requires an understanding of poverty that is wide-ranging and well articulated. If it were a question of material poverty alone, then the social sciences, which enable us to measure phenomena on the basis of mainly quantitative data, would be sufficient to illustrate its principal characteristics. Yet we know that other, non-material forms of poverty exist which are not the direct and automatic consequence of material deprivation. For example, in advanced wealthy societies, there is evidence of *marginalization*, as well as *affective, moral and spiritual poverty*, seen in people whose interior lives are disoriented and who experience various forms of malaise despite their economic prosperity.

On the one hand, I have in mind what is known as “**moral underdevelopment**”, and on the other hand the negative consequences of “**super development**”. Nor can I forget that, in so-called “poor” societies, economic growth is often hampered by *cultural impediments* which lead to inefficient use of available resources.

It remains true, however, that every form of externally imposed poverty has at its root a lack of respect for the transcendent dignity of the human person. When man is not considered within the total context of his vocation, and when the demands of a true “human ecology” are not respected, the cruel forces of poverty are unleashed, as is evident in certain specific areas that I shall now consider briefly one by one.

## پ **Poverty and moral implications**

3. Poverty is often considered a consequence of *demographic change*. For this reason, there are international campaigns afoot to reduce birth-rates, sometimes using methods that respect neither the dignity of the woman, nor the right of parents to choose responsibly how many children to have; graver still, these methods often fail to respect even the right to life. The extermination of millions of unborn children, in the name of the fight against poverty, actually constitutes the destruction of the poorest of all human beings.

And yet it remains the case that in 1981, around 40% of the world's population was below the threshold of absolute poverty, while today that percentage has been reduced by as much as a half, and whole peoples have escaped from poverty despite experiencing substantial demographic growth. This goes to show that resources to solve the problem of poverty do exist, even in the face of an increasing population. Nor must it be forgotten that, since the end of the Second World War,

the world's population has grown by four billion, largely because of certain countries that have recently emerged on the international scene as new economic powers, and have experienced rapid development specifically because of the large number of their inhabitants. Moreover, among the most developed nations, those with higher birth-rates enjoy better opportunities for development. In other words, population is proving to be an asset, not a factor that contributes to poverty.

4. Another area of concern has to do with *pandemic diseases*, such as malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS. Insofar as they affect the wealth-producing sectors of the population, they are a significant factor in the overall deterioration of conditions in the country concerned. Efforts to rein in the consequences of these diseases on the population do not always achieve significant results. It also happens that countries afflicted by some of these pandemics find themselves held hostage, when they try to address them, by those who make economic aid conditional upon the implementation of anti-life policies. It is especially hard to combat AIDS, a major cause of poverty, unless the moral issues connected with the spread of the virus are also addressed.

First and foremost, educational campaigns are needed, aimed especially at the young, to promote a sexual ethic that fully corresponds to the dignity of the person; initiatives of this kind have already borne important fruits, causing a reduction in the spread of AIDS. Then, too, the necessary medicines and treatment must be made available to poorer peoples as well. This presupposes a determined effort to promote medical research and innovative forms of treatment, as well as flexible application, when required, of the international rules protecting intellectual property, so as to guarantee necessary basic healthcare to all people.

5. A third area requiring attention in programmes for fighting poverty, which once again highlights its intrinsic moral dimension, is *child poverty*. When poverty strikes a family, the children prove to be the most vulnerable victims: almost half of those living in absolute poverty today are children.

To take the side of children when considering poverty means giving priority to those objectives which concern them most directly, such as caring for mothers, commitment to education, access to vaccines, medical care and drinking water, safeguarding the environment, and above all, commitment to defence of the family and the stability of relations within it. When the family is weakened, it is inevitably children who suffer. If the dignity of women and mothers is not protected, it is the children who are affected most.

*Benedict XVI*

