



Forgiveness

Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”

Mt 18: 21-22

“FORGIVE” APPEARS OVER 100 TIMES IN SCRIPTURE

Luke 6:37 “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven

Colossians 3:13 Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Jeremiah 31:34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Romans 12:17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all

The background features a repeating pattern of overlapping, semi-transparent blue circles of various shades, ranging from a deep navy to a lighter teal. Superimposed on these circles are delicate, gold-colored branches that resemble bare tree limbs or coral, with some small brown spots. The overall aesthetic is soft and textured, reminiscent of watercolor or a fine print.

The 4 Myths of Forgiveness

The background features a watercolor-style pattern. It consists of overlapping, semi-transparent circles in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy. Superimposed on these circles are delicate, branching structures in a golden-brown or light tan color, resembling bare tree branches or coral. The overall effect is soft and artistic.

Myth #1
Forgive and Forget

Forgive does not mean Forget

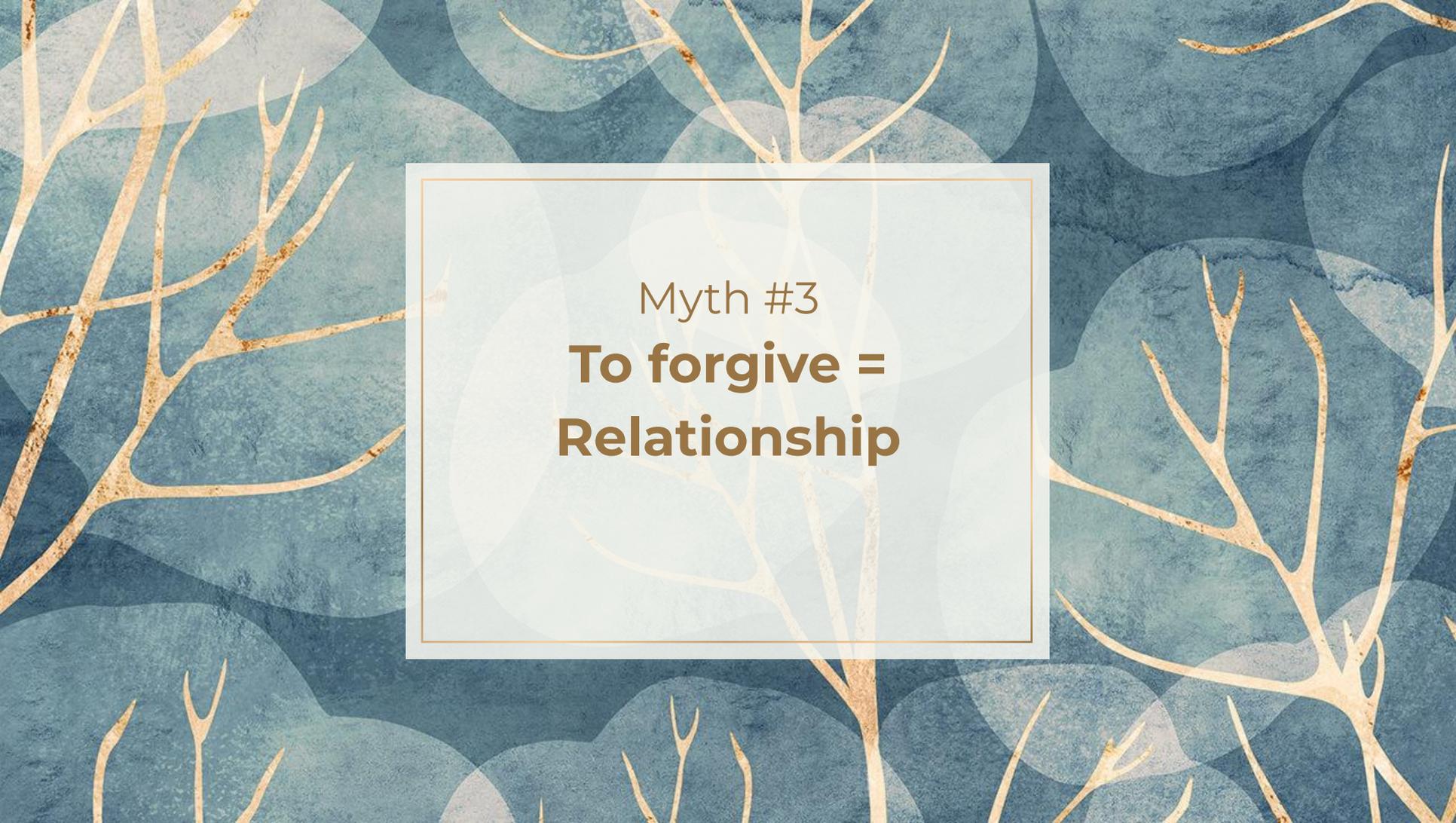
- **It's actually not always possible to forget**
- **Important not to forget but to remember the actions that occurred that gave us the wounds that we have**
- **Forgetting could diminish and negate the lessons that we have learned**
- **Forgetting would give up the right to protect ourselves**
- **We need to remember so that if the offender/another comes to wound us again, we will be awake and able to protect ourselves spiritually in order to avoid future pain**
- **These memories should not weigh us down, jade us or rob us of JOY**

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Myth #2
Forgiveness = Giving in

To Forgive does not mean we've lost and the offender has won

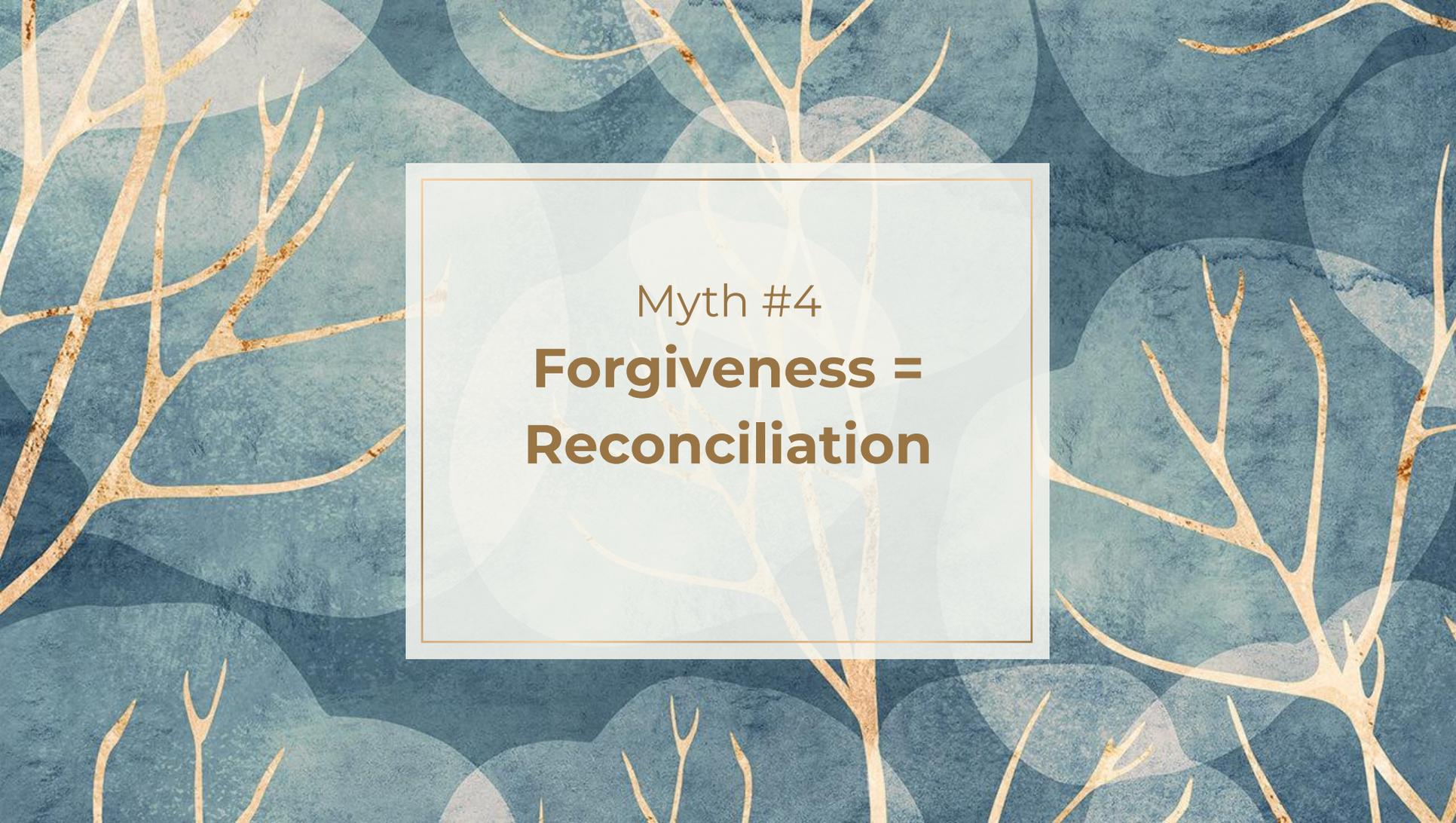
- **Letting go does not mean giving in**
- **We believe that by forgiving the offender, he/she has won**
- **We believe then that they have control - the upper hand**
- **This is furthest from the truth... when we refuse to forgive is actually when the offender wins**
- **When we do not forgive, it's like being held hostage, but forgiveness is what sets us free**



Myth #3
**To forgive =
Relationship**

To forgive does not mean a relationship with the offender

- This is one of the greatest lies of forgiveness
- Sometimes we have cut off our relationship with the offender, he/she has passed away or the encounter was not one of a relationship to begin with
- We can still forgive because with forgiveness, the offender need never be aware that we are forgiving him/her
- They may not be aware or even care that we are attempting to let go of our anger or hurt by forgiving



Myth #4

**Forgiveness =
Reconciliation**

Forgiveness is Not Reconciliation

- This is the freeing gift given to us by Jesus
- Forgiveness is **NOT** reconciliation... reconciliation involves a dialogue between two people who are both trying to come to terms of peace
- Reconciliation means moving past feelings of hurt or wrongful actions
- Forgiveness is actually **ONE-SIDED**

What is Forgiveness?

- **Releasing the mind and heart from past hurts**
- **Releasing ourselves from resentments to which we have a right in order to move our own lives forward**
- **Releasing our anger against someone unto God**
- **Forgiveness does not require us to declare the offender NOT guilty; rather we recognize their guilt and give to God the right to administer justice in His time and on His terms**
- **Forgiveness is for ourselves**
- **Forgiveness is God's gift to US, not the offender**
- **Forgiveness involves feelings of positive self-esteem, wellness, freedom and acceptance**

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**Forgiveness is an
expression of our
core goodness
and is a profound
state of letting go**

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- ★ **Jesus tells us to let go; He knows that forgiveness is a profound state of letting go... a process, a journey which can weave us in and out and back through many places we may have already been**
- ★ **Forgiveness may be difficult to obtain and Christ calls us not to become discouraged. Although true forgiveness is one-sided, it is not being done solo or alone**
- ★ **If we let the Holy Spirit into our anger, our hurts and our resentments, He will lead us through the raging waters of this journey**



The 5 Stages of Forgiveness

Stage 1: Victimhood

- In this stage, many give up because here we feel most alone, vulnerable and exposed
- The enemy takes hold here and encourages bitterness to persist in self-righteousness and indignation
- The evil one tells us to keep playing the video of our hurts over & over until he succeeds in leading us in the opposite direction of healing
- We embellish the story in our minds, tell all we know about what has happened to us and we feel justified

Stage 2: Acknowledging & Releasing Anger

- We can never truly forgive as long as we harbor anger and resentment
- 2 crucial parts to this stage: Part 1
 - Acknowledge that we have been wronged; say Yes, I am a victim, I have been hurt, abused, stolen from, lied to... But we must then follow with: What am I gaining by holding on to this? Do I feel superior? Is my pain an excuse for my actions or my inactions? How would I identify myself if I didn't have this pain? What am I losing by holding on to this anger? Health, relationships, sleep, appetite, JOY?

- **Part 2: Release & discharge the anger**
 - **Many ways to do this:**
 - **Express your anger in words - shout, write, speak, talk it out with God**
 - **Work it out - walk, run, exercise, move**
 - **Cry - hurt flows out with tears; tears provide the soul with moisture which leads to growth in the virtue of holiness**
 - **Renounce those feelings, lies and spirits which come NOT from God, but from the devil**

Stage 3: Make the decision to forgive

- The only way for our wounds to heal is for us to forgive the one who inflicted them upon us
- This ability to forgive requires a partnership with Jesus
- Our job is to provide the willingness to forgive and the willingness to grow in the spirit of forgiveness
- Jesus' part assumes the responsibility of healing
- Before we can heal, we must have the **DESIRE** to heal
- Ask the Holy Spirit for this desire to grow in self acceptance & humility - **PRAY ABOUT IT**

- **Humility is the foundation of forgiveness**
- **Humility compels us to accept the fact that we are capable of being wrong, even if we are convinced that we are right**
- **Humility involves acknowledging what actions or words we may have contributed to the conflict**
- **Humility is the “grandeur of the small”**

- **Admitting to ourselves and accepting our faults, our part/our role in the pain is part of the healing process**
- **Acknowledging our wrongs to ourselves is self-acceptance but when we bring our faults to others, this is HUMILITY**
- **Our Catholic faith gives us the beautiful opportunity to do this in the Sacrament of Reconciliation where we humble ourselves before God to ask for our own forgiveness – it is a Sacrament of Healing**
- **Reconciliation allows for the healing of relationships**

- **Sometimes the greatest battle is not in forgiving others, but in forgiving ourselves**
- **We must accept self-forgiveness by knowing that Jesus has forgiven us and He expects us to forgive those as He has forgiven**
- **Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive the grace needed to forgive ourselves and eventually to forgive others and ultimately to forgive God**

- **Forgiving God: if we are willing to admit it, we have probably blamed Him for hurting us, abandoning us or allowing this to happen**
 - **We may fear punishment because of this anger**
 - **We may have guilt over feeling this anger towards God**
 - **By expressing this anger, we can come to know the fullness of His love and His freedom**

Stage 4: Discovering Empathy

- **Ways to find empathy:**
 - **Prayer**
 - **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**
 - **Celebration of the Mass & reception of the Sacraments**
 - **Union & Communion with the Holy Trinity**
- **We can find compassion for the one who wounded us even though we do not condone his/her actions**
- **Jesus showed compassion for His enemies as He looked out over His prosecutors and cried out, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34)**

Stage 5: Let go of the Hurt and Move On

- When we can say and mean it...
 - I will not let this wound suffocate the goodness in me or direct me away from God's will who is all good and deserving of all my love
- Only then we will be ready to take the final step
“As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Col 3:12)

Practicing the Stages of Forgiveness

The Mass provides the opportunity to pass through the 5 stages of forgiveness:

- ❖ Stage 1: Victimhood - We enter the Church with all that makes us who we are: anger, resentments, worries, anxiety
- ❖ Stage 2: Acknowledge/release - Every time we celebrate Mass, we acknowledge and give over our wounds during the offertory by laying them before the Table of the Lord
- ❖ Stage 3: Self-acceptance/Humility - “Confessing to almighty God and to you, my brothers and sisters that I have sinned...” and when we pray, “Lord I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed”

- ❖ **Stage 4: Empathy** - During the Transubstantiation, Jesus partners with us in healing as He takes our wounds and transforms them into His wounds.
 - He takes our pains, sufferings, worries, anxieties and turns them into His own Body and Blood.
 - This is the ultimate gift of divine empathy.
 - When we receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we become One Body and One Spirit.
 - Our faith teaches us that once united, no part of the body shall war against another part.
 - As we say “amen” and receive the Eucharist into our bodies, we are joining together in Holy Communion and accepting that Jesus died because He wanted to save us from our sins.

- ❖ **Stage 5: Letting Go** - Finally, when we go forth to love and serve the Lord and sin no more, we are acknowledging that Jesus has forgiven us.
 - As we will also go and forgive those who have trespassed against us
- ❖ We end the 5 Stages and the Mass with the words of confirmation, “Thanks be to God.”

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*“All things work together
for good for those who love
God and are called
according to His Purpose.”*

Rom 8:28