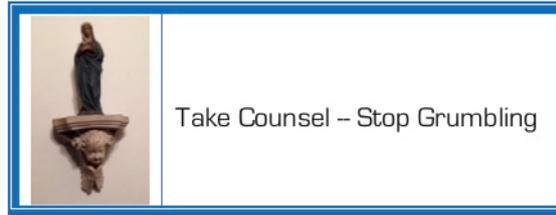


Everyone has
need to be
forgiven



'Forgiveness is the greatest factor of growth for any human being.' But it is demanding; it is an exercise which asks of us honestly and love. It brings us face-to-face with our pain, it forces us to confront it and deal with it, and Saint Benedict would add, the sooner the better, since unless they are cauterized wounds grow and fester. ... Then what began as quite a small grudge or resentment has been nursed into a great brooding cloud that smothers all my inner landscape, or has become a cancer eating up more and more of my inner self. Saint Benedict is absolutely adamant about this. He described it as murmuring or grumbling in the heart and he is quite clear that it must be routed out before it starts to do terrible damage. Esther de Waal, Seeking God

Anyone deeply involved in a parish church carries resentments (those on the fringes have resentments but often unrelated to the parish). Our feelings get hurt. We are not included in some activity. Our suggestions are discounted. There is a member who we believe behaved badly and gotten away with it. There are hundreds of ways in which people in close contact with one another experience resentment.

If we move past the resentment. Putting our mind and heart onto some worthy work – helping a co-worker, cleaning the baptismal font, changing our driving habits, feeding the homeless, taking our closest friend to lunch, praying the Office, time with our children. Our task is to place the resentment on the shelf, give ourselves to love and joy, and in time we forget where we left that resentment. Our task is to develop a spiritual habit of forgiving quickly. It's a stance we can choose. We orient ourselves toward forgiveness. We step away from a judgment stance into a forgiveness stance.

Benedict wanted the community to pray twice a day, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Forgive – sins, debts, trespasses. Also, faults, lapses, wrongs, failings, offenses and transgressions. We are to orient ourselves toward forgiveness.

The alternative is that we nurture the resentment. We feed the hatred. We poison the well all drink from. We stain the soul of the parish. We murmur, grumble and complain. We destroy ourselves in our self-righteousness. Sadly, we may not know we have lost our soul. We have become blind and deaf. We cannot see; we cannot hear.

He that cannot forgive others, breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven; for everyone has need to be forgiven.
George Herbert