

*Marians of the Immaculate Conception and EWTN presents*

# The Divine Mercy Cenacle



LESSON SIX

## Forgiveness

Saint Faustina wrote, "We resemble God most when we forgive our neighbors" (1148), and "He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God" (390\*).

As in the story of the Prodigal Son, there are times in our lives where we must come and ask for forgiveness. However, there are also times where we must be like the father of the Prodigal Son and forgive others their transgressions. And, we must be careful not to be like the jealous and unforgiving brother, who complained, "I have been good and never disobeyed one of your orders, yet you never gave me as much as a kid goat to celebrate with my friends" (Lk 15:29).

### 1. How is forgiveness at the heart of the Mercy Message?

The message given to St. Faustina calls us to trust in God in all situations, to ask for His mercy, and be merciful to others. As God forgives our sins, we are to forgive others their transgressions against us. "Whenever you stand to pray, forgive anyone against whom you have a grievance, so that your heavenly Father may forgive you your faults" (Mk 11:25).

Forgiveness is at the heart of the message of Divine Mercy. We pray with confidence to God the Father, asking for forgiveness and mercy, "... Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Mt 6:12). "for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Mt 6:14-15).

How can we love the God we cannot see, if we do not love the brother or sister we can see? (see 1 Jn 4:20). "In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and this hardness makes us impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to His grace" (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2840).

Through the Cenacle, members learn and realize in a deeper way the importance of forgiveness, as it can be a major impediment to spiritual progress.

### 2. How can being overly critical and judgmental impede our ability to forgive?

Forgiveness is easier if we can avoid being judgmental. Aren't we all so quick to criticize, condemn and judge? How easily we overlook our own faults by justifying and rationalizing our conduct and defects. "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? (Mt 7:3).

### 3. What does the “Lord’s Prayer” say about forgiveness?

Think of how many times we as Christians recite the Lord’s Prayer! and say... “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...” and yet we struggle with forgiving others. In actuality, many carry anger and hatred for years, never resolving the situation internally. We seldom forgive and rarely forget, and yet we pray for God to forgive us as we forgive others.

Not only is it hard to forgive others, but it is also very difficult to forgive ourselves. Lack of forgiveness brings great suffering and emotional pain associated with negativism, depression, outbursts of anger, and addictive behaviors. Many who have committed serious sin, like abortion, have never come to accept God’s mercy because they feel that they have committed the “unforgivable sin.”

When painful memories of past sins or sins committed against us threaten to destroy our inner peace, it is then that we need to seek forgiveness. God in His compassion always offers us His forgiveness as He calls us to forgive others.

### 4. Do we ever doubt that God has forgiven us?

Frequently an obstacle to forgiveness is believing that we are truly forgiven. Accepting forgiveness can be difficult. At times we do not believe that others have forgiven us. We do the same with God — we think our sins are so great we doubt God’s forgiveness and yet God’s merciful love knows no bounds. He forgives the woman caught in the act of adultery who was placed before Him. When all who accused her departed because of their own sins Jesus said to her, “Woman where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said ‘No one Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, do not sin again.’” Can we ever doubt God’s forgiveness when Jesus forgave even those who tortured and crucified Him and yet, He asked on their behalf: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Lk 23:34).

\* References without a source listed with the number are taken from the *Dairy of Saint Maria Faustina*.



## Marians of the Immaculate Conception

To learn more about The Divine Mercy message and devotion, the Marians of the Immaculate Conception, and Eucharistic Apostles of The Divine Mercy visit us online at [www.thedivinemercy.org](http://www.thedivinemercy.org) or call 1-800-462-7426.