

“By his wounds, you have been healed.”

(I Peter 2:24).

People wound us. This hurt may stir anger and resentment within us which can inflict a deeper more deadly wound which we may inflict upon ourselves.

In the “Our Father” our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us to ask the Father, “*Forgive us our sins.*” But he also immediately adds and stresses emphatically, “*As we forgive those who have sinned against us.*” People sin against us by wounding us in ways too numerous to list. Among them are abusing us verbally, physically or sexually, judging us unjustly, rejecting us, denying us of our rights, spreading lies about our character, hurting those whom we love, damaging our property, stealing from us, shaming us before others, falsely accusing us out of envy or jealousy, disliking or even hating us, maliciously trying to harm us even to the extent of plotting to kill us, etc. All this is extremely hurtful, and some wounds go very deep into our psyche. These hurts arouse anger in us and times very deep anger and understandably so.

Anger is an emotion meant to be aroused when we are in need to defend ourselves or to emphatically call for justice. But it must be tempered by love. Jesus had a “*righteous angry*” motivated by love when he saw the vendors turning the Temple into a “den of thieves.” All emotions, including anger, need to be guided by the virtues of prudence and temperance. Throughout his life Jesus expressed anger at his opponents, but he laid anger aside when it had served its purpose. Because of opposition, Jesus did not become “an angry person” carrying his anger till his death. Often in the Old Testament God expresses his anger, but he does so to awaken the people of their sinful behavior, so as to lead them to repentance and his forgiveness. He does not desire the death of the sinner. The purpose of his anger is to restore them to life. Those who wrote the psalms express anger in many psalms and so do the prophets, at times dramatically so with expressions of vengeance at persecutors. They even have the courage to express their anger at the Lord, complaining why he has seemingly forgotten them or failed to hear them. But they do this within a trusting relationship. But they do not turn from him, but wait for his response. They allow their human weakness and limited vision to surface. By expressing anger to the Lord, the psalmist or the prophet does not bury anger and stew in it, but they express it and expose their human frailty to the Lord.—***leaving it to God to deal with their enemies and to respond to their complaints.*** God may refuse to act in the way the psalmist or prophet asks him to. But through this candid prayer of “getting it off his chest” he does not ruminate in his bitterness. In prayer he *actively invites God into his angry heart*. By expressing himself from his weak human condition he also begins to open his heart to begin to experience God’s presence. When the Lord makes his presence felt, he always breathes within the psalmist his Spirit of Peace as a “healing ointment” seeping into the deep wound he exposed to God.

Thus, Scripture teaches that anger should be expressed in prayer to surface deep hurts and **to invite God *into* these hurts to heal us.** St. Paul says, “*Be angry but sin not. Do not let the sun*

set on your anger. Do not give the devil a chance to work on you” (Eph 4:2). We must be on guard lest anger turn into **resentment**, and allowing the devil to lock us into ourselves and cut us off from God and others. Resentment is **choosing to hold on to and ruminate about our anger or bury it in our hearts**. It festers and infects the whole person. Resentment is anger that has metastasized over time and, like cancer, spreads and controls a person’s entire emotional and spiritual life. It deadens relationships with others, even with God. Resentments keep us focused on our past wounds and the negative judgements and resentments that others hold against us. This may cause us to question our self-worth and shrink into ourselves or to become over reactive and aggressive.

The cure begins by naming the wounds and the pain they cause us and lifting them in prayer to the Lord and bringing them into the light—together with all the destructive attitudes they spawn—so that in the Light of Christ, we can become more aware of their deadly hold on us and seek his freedom as the beloved children of the Father. Only when we are truly aware of the destructiveness of resentments can we become utterly convinced that we need to be healed, delivered and freed of their bondage. Only then we can renounce their hidden darkness in the Name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord and claim our true identity as sons and daughters of the Father.

The Darkness, Bitterness and Negative Attitudes of Resentment **When I resent a person, I become a slave of that person.**

I am often too blind or hesitant to admit clearly the power of the bondage that resentment inflicts upon me. The following list of poisons awakens me to realize the pervasive symptoms of resentment. Let it help me to call upon the Lord to shed his light on the darkness of denial and to reach out to his outstretched his saving strong arm extended to lift me from the bondage of resentment into his freedom as a child of God.

The person I resent robs me of my freedom and my peace of mind. He/she too often invades my thoughts and stirs an inquiet spirit within me. .

*Resentment can stir up a spirit of seeing myself as **a victim** threatened by that person who instills doubt or fear and causes me stress and anxiety. This person’s opinion of me may infect me with doubts about myself and my self-image.*

To compensate for this sense of being judged or demeaned, I can react negatively and become reactive and defensive, protesting that “I am somebody to be reckoned with” overly eager to protect my dignity, and express my self-worth, but more as an effort to drown out my nagging lack of self-confidence.

*Resentment stirs up discontent in my heart. Nagging discontent can create an inner emptiness. **I may begin to believe lies about myself** that blind me to my true dignity as a blessed child of God, my heavenly Father.*

Resentment can infect me with anxiety and depression and rob me of hope for the future. It robs me of strength and of joy, like a parasite hidden in my heart.

Resentments can cause factions. People who resent the same person become allies of discontent.

The person I resent influences the tone of my voice, causes me to find fault with others and can turn me into a complainer and a judgmental gossip by spreading stories about “their enemy” and others close to him/her.

Resentment robs me of joy and may arouse envy of those who are joyful. Resentment spreads jealousy, a spirit of division, suspicions and causes divisions in families, workplaces, neighborhoods and parishes.

No amount of coffee, alcohol, cigarettes or drugs, or TV or internet or video games loosens the chains of resentment. Such escapes can be harmful and may give rise to compulsive behaviors or even addictions.

The one I resent stirs anger in me when driving my car (road rage). Such anger makes me testy with coworkers, classmates, family, and friends. An attitude of discontent infects further discontent.

That person may require me to take medicine for indigestion, headaches ulcers and depression caused by repressed anger. Repressed anger may cause me to withdraw into myself and to isolate myself.

Repressed anger arouses an attitude of passive aggressiveness, a spirit of being spiteful..... like a hidden infection that oozes out of me without my being aware of it.

The person I resent may steal the last moment of consciousness before I go to sleep and is there to nag me when you awake. I cannot take a vacation from resentment. It is always a fellow traveler.

So, if you want to be a slave.....

.....hold on to your anger and nurse your resentments!

Or “pretend” to ignore them and simply “stuff them” deeper inside yourself, and they will gradually and subtly embitter you and rob you of joy. They will create a poison of anxiety, sarcasm, cynicism and a negative disposition. *But sometimes the person we hold a grudge against is our very own selves! We may allow past sins to weigh us down with shame and self-*

condemnation. Jesus has forgiven us, let us allow him to heal our shame in the process of his blessing us as he blessed and empowers us to be free of resenting others.

**But I Am Not a Slave. In All Confidence I Claim My Dignity and My Freedom.
I Have Been Set Free by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

With Christ I must renounce the spirit of resentment which oppresses and holds me bound. My stand must be firmly planted within the **reality of my true identity in his eyes and heart**, for resentment **whispers lies about who I am** that prevent me from appreciating my true self-worth and true meaning of life. **God reveals that I am his child.** The Father created me in his image. Moreover, as a **baptized Christian**, I have been *“born again in water and the Spirit.”* St. Paul states, *“Give thanks to the Father for making us worthy to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He freed us from darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of his Son”* (Col 1:12-13). *“God showed his love for us: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:6). Jesus tells us, *“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”* (John 8:36). Jesus frees us from the destructive aggressive the **“false self”** that acts like a false god seeking a false freedom by taking revenge on those who have offended and hurt us.

In Christ: Healing, Forgiveness and Freedom

Christ prayed for those who wounded and killed him, and **he forgave them.** On the Cross, Jesus prayed, *“Father forgive them”* (Luke 23:24). In his ministry **he also healed:** *“Power came forth from him and healed them”* (Luke 6:19). **To forgive from the heart is humanly impossible.** That is why Jesus knocks on our inner door pleading with us to let him enter. We must open our heart to Christ and reach out and put our hand into his open side. The healing power that issues from Christ **releases the Holy Spirit who empowers us to forgive.** Healing comes to us by praying for the strength to forgive as Jesus taught us: *“Father, forgive us our sinsas we forgive those who sinned against us”* (Matthew 6:12). In prayer, invite the Lord Jesus **into** the wound that is infected with the nagging spirit of unforgiveness. And invite the Lord **into** the resentment itself. The forgiveness of Christ is like a healing balm applied to a wound, like radiation penetrating a cancerous tumor.

Jesus heals the hurt and bestows the grace and power to forgive.

Consider praying in the following way: Recall the details of the event when you were wounded. Be specific about who hurt you and how you were hurt. **But never go back into that memory to be there alone with that person. Always go there with the Lord. Relive the memory with Christ being present with you.** In faith invoke the Name of Jesus. first to heal you and then to empower you to forgive. Jesus desires to heal the memory that haunts you and to grant you the grace to claim the peace that is yours as a child of the Father. **Inviting the Lord into one such vivid memory is an effective way to receive this particular grace he desires to give you now.** Faith assures you that Christ was present to you in that past event, even though you were not aware of his being present to you at that time. **Time collapses in prayer,** for you are in the presence of God who is eternal. *“There is no time with God: a thousand years, a single day: it*

is all one” (2 Pet 3:8). This memory awakens your imagination, but with a graced difference. Jesus also is **now** actively present in your memory. **He was with you then and is with you now.** Time disappears in Christ’s presence. He lives in the “*Eternal Now*.” In the power Faith in him, you can be with him and interact with him now recalling your experience of the past. We do believe that God is everywhere, there is no one isolated place on earth, no hour or minute in the history of the world or in our personal history where he was absent. We believe this truth, but too often we neglect to relate this firmly believed truth to past painful memories in our own lives when we were abused or abandoned or maligned. Then it “seemed” – due to the pain we experience, especially as children--**as if** God had not been there. **As if**, God somehow was absent in that particular time and place, and we were left totally alone, forgotten by him when we needed him the most. This false assumption must be overcome by our Faith that God has loved us at every moment, every second, of our lives. He is not simply a “fair weather Friend” being present to us when he needs us.

It is very important to first pray to the Lord to heal the hurt which the person inflicted on you. Attend first to the wound that still causes you pain, instead of focusing on the person who hurt you. Being fixated on the person stirs anger at him/her and arouses the old feelings of resentment toward that person. This will sidetrack you from attending to heal the hurt you experienced then and in some way still experiencing. The Lord is your Physician. Tell him—as you tell your doctor-- where it hurts. How were you offended, maligned, pained? Ask Jesus to enter **into** the painful memory to heal you—ask him to lay his healing hand on that very wound. His healing penetrates where no medicine or painkiller can penetrate.

As you pray, picture Jesus as he enters into this memory to be with you. You may be able to visualize him clearly. Or you may simply be aware of his presence. You may ask him where he is in the scene of your memory, where in that particular place where that the hurtful event took place. You may sense his presence near you or at some distance in the scene waiting for you to call out to him and ask his help—as Peter cried out when he was drowning. “**Lord save me!**” Ask him come to you in that place where you were hurt as if were your self imposed “locked inner room” where that past memory still vividly exists. Recall, Jesus came to the apostles who locked themselves in the Upper Room out of fear and despair and anger at those who killed Jesus and their shame for abandoning him. Jesus says to you as he said to them, “**Peace be with you.**” Let his peace descend **into** your memory and troubled emotions and into your heart. Remember again, time collapses in prayer for we are in the presence of the Lord who is eternal. I repeat, “**There is no time with God; a thousand years, a single day, is all one**” (2 Pet 3:8). Picture Jesus with you then in the details of the painful event and when and how it happened in the past. Ask him for the grace to experience how he is present with you and for you now in the present moment as your Healer, Consoler and Lord. “**Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever**” (Hebrews 13:8).

Then spend some time in being in Christ’s presence calling upon him who comes in ways you least expect. Then ask for the grace to forgive the PERSON—not his hurtful actions. Jesus teaches us to “**Forgive those who trespass against us**”—that is, the people, not his actions which may be despicable and cruel. **Forgiveness is not condoning nor is it excusing the**

person. In fact, if his actions were unjust and damaged us or others, we may be compelled to bring the person to justice and claim our rights or the rights of others. Nevertheless, we ask to be free of the bondage of unforgiveness and of holding nursing a grudge. **Forgiveness may lead to reconciliation, which would be truly a gift, *but often that is not possible.*** Forgiveness and reconciliation are not the same. If the person is abusive, prudence may demand that we avoid him in the future and not risk further harm to ourselves or another. **First and foremost, we forgive the person before God.** Very often it may be more prudent not to inform the person that we forgave them. It may be counterproductive to do so. Moreover, often the person may be deceased. **Yet, forgiveness still benefits us, for we become free from being enslaved by the person we resent.** Possibly in the future we may be able to mention that we forgave them, but only if the circumstances warrant it. Prudence must be our guide, and we may ask to what purpose and for whose benefit do we want to reveal what we did?

But some deep-seated hurts may take a long time for forgiveness to grow more heart felt. Jesus tells Peter that we may have to pray “*seventy times seven*” until forgiving *the person* becomes more heart-felt. (Matt 18:22). The journey of forgiving often progresses in “baby steps.” As healing deepens, Christ’s power to forgive grows as well.

Also, recall how **Jesus has forgiven you.** This will encourage and strengthen you to forgive others. His compassion for you is a balm of healing medicine for your heart that strengthens you to continue in your resolve to forgive those who sinned against you. Ask Jesus daily to set you free from the prison of a resentful heart. His utmost desire is to give you this peace. **In the Eucharist he gives you his Blood to drink—“*shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”** Each time you receive Christ’s Body and Blood, his compassion anoints your heart and empowers your will to lift in prayer those whom you struggle to forgive. Christ empowers you to fulfill his command, “***Be compassionate as your heavenly Father is compassionate***” (Luke 6:36). Christ speaks to you personally, “***If the Son sets you free, will be free indeed***” (John 8:36). In Christ nothing, no one, has the right, nor the power, to hold you bound. **You are the beloved child of the Father.**

Drawing upon your faith in Jesus, ask him to strengthen your desire and your will by the power of the Holy Spirit to be free of resentment. *Claim your dignity as a child of the Father and pray with confidence* in the spirit of renewing your baptismal promises when you renounced Satan and all his empty promises and lies, and when you proclaimed your faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

My Lord Jesus Christ, I acknowledge and claim my God-given dignity as a child of your Father and that I am also your sister, your brother, redeemed by your Blood. In that assurance and by your love for me and your authority I pray:

- ***In your Name Jesus Christ, I ask you to heal the hurt of the wounds that still afflict me, that were caused by those who hurt me.***
- ***In your Name Jesus, I ask for your power to forgive the people who have hurt me deeply and I thank you that you have already granted me the power to begin to forgive them.***
- ***In your Name Jesus, I ask you to give me the will and commitment to grow in forgiving them. I trust that over time you will enlighten and empower me to forgive them from my heart as you forgave me.***
- ***In your Name Jesus, I renounce all negative thoughts, moods, attitudes, and spirits of darkness that unforgiveness and resentment that I have allowed to spawn within my heart and that rob me of joy and freedom.***
- ***In your Name of Jesus, I claim my birthright as a child of your Father and your disciple, and as I did at my baptism, I renounce the power of Satan and all his empty promises and the sick attitudes of resentment that oppress me.***
- ***In your Name Jesus and by your authority and your love for me, I break the power of these attitudes and spirits and by your authority I command them to leave me here and now.***

Jesus Christ lay your pierced hand upon the open wound I bring to you. Draw out the pain I experienced when I was abused, rejected, abandoned, ridiculed, misjudged, ignored, blamed or demeaned. Draw this pain into your pierced hand and into your Sacred Heart. Heal my heart caused by these wounds. By your Blood shed for the forgiveness of my sins, grant me the power and freedom to continue to forgive the person or persons who hurt me. Unite me with yourself in the communion of sharing in your suffering so that I may share in your life-giving Resurrection and in the Communion of Saints in glory. Jesus, I trust in you.

Heavenly Father, I come to you with renewed hope. I open my heart to receive the outpouring of your Holy Spirit who fills my heart and enkindles within me the power of your love. I come to you in gratitude as your prodigal child held securely in your fatherly embrace. You have clothed me with the robe of freedom, and you placed upon my finger the precious ring as the symbol of my dignity as your child. May your joy which I experience in your embrace be my joy and my strength to go forth as a disciple of Jesus your Son to serve your people in his Name. Father, I praise you, I bless you, I adore you, I glorify you, I give you thanks for your great glory.

AMEN