Forgiveness Matt 18:21-35

My favourite quote on forgiveness is from the film ‘the first wives club’ actually said by the former Mrs. Trump, ‘don’t get mad. Get everything’!’

Actually that is a quote on the very opposite of forgiveness, it is scorched earth policy, leaving no room for any kind of comeback.

The best quote on forgiveness I know is from Martin Luther King, ‘Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is permanent attitude.’ Ultimately the quality of our spirituality is defined by our capacity for forgiveness.

In the Gospel Peter is the one to speak up; almost certainly he was asked to have Jesus clarify what he meant by forgiving your enemies. There are two levels to forgiveness. The first is decisional and the second is from the heart. You can decide to forgive but can’t let go. Forgiving from the heart is the work of Grace. It is also attained by practice. It is a discipline practiced every day. Letting go of all frustration, grudges and reactions of the day, as St. Paul says ‘do not let the sun set on your anger.’ It is what St. Ignatius means by his daily practice of the awareness examen. Whatever practices we do everyday to help us reduce the levels of un-forgiveness in our lives.

In the pew sheet I share with you a story about the consequences of un-forgiveness and I would like to read it for ou as the lesson is vital for our spiritual growth.

Parable on Forgiveness.

‘One of my teachers had each one of us bring a clear plastic bag and a sack of potatoes. For every person we’d refuse to forgive in our life experiences, we are told to choose a potato, write on it the name and date, and put it in the plastic bag. Some of our bags, as you can imagine, were quite heavy.

We were then told to carry this bag with us everywhere for one week, putting it beside our bed at night, on the car seat when driving, next to us at our desk at work.

The hassle of lugging this around with us made it clear what a weight we were carrying spiritually, and how we had to pay attention to it all the time to not forget and keep leaving it in embossing places.

Naturally, the condition of the potatoes deteriorated to a nasty slime. This was a great metaphor for the price we pay for keeping our pain and heavy negativity! Too often we thing forgiveness as a gift to the other person, and it clearly is for ourselves.

So the next time you decide you can’t forgive someone as yourself ---isn’t your bag heavy enough?