



## The Director's Message

By: Dcn. John "Scotty"  
Wainscott, OFS



**Spring is bursting out all over!** I don't know where you are but, here winter has been a piece of cake. In my first winter on staff at IL Ritiro, I had been looking forward to the snowy winter scenes around the hills of the retreat center. I do not miss the snow and ice all that

much. I just hope we do not have to pay for it late into spring; Missouri has had some heavy April snow storms.

Pay for it did I say? Feeling as if we don't deserve this and we should expect that some retribution will be required. That brings to mind the theme of our first newsletter this year: "Forgiveness." Because we all are sinners or have been sinned against, we often experience difficulty with asking for or giving forgiveness.

My brother, may he be at peace, was a child of the sixties and suffered all the ills of that generation. He was a wonderful caring man, who near the end of his life was trying very hard to amend for all the pain he had brought on my parents. One day a couple of months before his death he came to me and told me how sorry he was. He had stolen a rather costly bow and some arrows from me when he had been visiting me in Virginia. I had an interest in archery for a while. I had stored them with the bowling ball, golf clubs, etc., in the garage abandoned until the next yard sale that never happened.

For years he was carrying so much guilt. I told him if he had asked, I would have given him the equipment. We hugged and laughed and it was over. Ok, truthfully, I was a little upset just because I hadn't even known the things were gone. I very soon did feel the joy of brotherhood and glad it was over. Well, maybe not over; I kept thinking how much needless pain he had put himself through. We could have been much closer and I could have behaved like a loving brother and held it over his head (hey bro, you owe me; you cut the grass and take mom to the store.) After his admission, we both felt the joy that we Catholics feel when leaving

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the confessional. We walk head high, going forward with the hope of eternal peace.

Considering how he might have felt after getting it off his heart, filled my heart, and I felt joy from honestly forgiving him. Often it has crossed my mind that many of us may be loaded with the burden of not having asked forgiveness from someone we mistreated. I envision myself walking the streets of heaven (purgatory maybe) when I see a person I owe an apology, and for fear of being exposed, or expelled, I rush to him and on my knees I beg forgiveness. After a long puzzled look he says, "What are you talking about, do I know you?" Forgive me for running on about a family matter; however, it does give me the opportunity to inform you of an upcoming retreat.

Check out the information on "the Healing Power of Forgiveness" in this issue, or visit our web site at: [www.il-ritiro.org](http://www.il-ritiro.org)

### Poor picture; Great Presentation!

On March 11<sup>th</sup> a good crowd enjoyed the spiritual wisdom of Sister Alacoque Burger, OSF. Offering



"Serenity as a Way of Life"

The photographer was so taken by the content of the presentation he (ok I) forgot to check the setting for the back light of a beautiful sun filled day. We will do better next time. There will be a next time!

# How To Forgive Anyone

By: Frederick Hermann, Author of *How To Forgive Anyone For Anything* ([Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com))



A priest sat at the bedside of a young woman suffering with terminal cancer and whispered, "Is there anyone in your life with whom you are angry or estranged?"

The woman replied bitterly, "My sister."

The priest softly inquired, "Would you like to forgive her now?" Tears of anger welled up in her eyes and with clenched teeth she bitterly declared, "I'd rather have cancer."

Who do you need to forgive? Who has offended you? Think of that person right now. Is it a parent, spouse, or family member? Perhaps it is a former friend, co-worker, or stranger? Maybe you struggle to forgive yourself, a religious group, or even God?

Our natural reaction to an offense is to become angry. Sometimes we bury painful memories deep inside our hearts. Yet many studies prove bitterness is stressful. Unresolved anger can make us physically sick. Clinging to resentment is like drinking poison while hoping to affect the other person. We harm ourselves most of all. Why is that? Because unforgiveness causes us to turn away from God and others. Bitterness make us turn inward towards ourselves. St. Augustine described this deadly ailment as a life curved inward (*incurvatus in se*). We are created to live outward for God and others, not inward for ourselves. So we become icy and cold when we separate ourselves from the warm source of all creation -- our loving God. When we choose unforgiveness, we dam the river of God's love.

What is the remedy? Jesus said, "*If you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*" (Matthew 6:14). We must forgive others for their sins if we wish to be forgiven for our sins. We may try our best to forgive but sometimes the hurt is too deep and we cannot forgive. Then what?

After much pain and grief, we finally admit that we cannot forgive alone; we need God's help. This is a great turning point in our lives, the point at which we begin to learn humility and explore how to really trust God's love and mercy. At last we begin to open ourselves to God, to experience a new awakening (metanoia) to the deepest truth of our faith—God is love.

When we ask God to help us, we discover with surprise that he has been right there by our side the whole time! He has been wanting to help us, willing to forgive us, and

waiting to help us forgive others! Like the father who rushes to greet his prodigal son, God rushes to embrace us when we call for help! God's divine love overflows all our selfish dams. He engulfs us with his mercy and sweeps us off our feet with love. With astonishment we realize God has truly washed away all our sins. At the same time we feel him empowering us to love and forgive others as he loves and forgives us. He is liberating us from selfish anger, self-defeating shame, and the dark prison of resentment. God is giving us new life in him. He is freeing us to live, laugh, and love again. Tears of gratitude fill our eyes, we fold our hands in prayer, and God's divine love flows through us once more. Now we understand the wisdom of St. Francis: "*It is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.*"

By the way, the woman with cancer? Her priest gently guided her to forgive her sister once and for all. And guess what? Her cancer soon disappeared, she regained her good health, and her incredulous doctor pronounced her recovery miraculous. (End)

Frederick Hermann is the author of [How to Forgive Anyone for Anything](#), [The Joyful Catholic](#) and [The Spirit Set Me Free](#) . He is, also, a nationally syndicated columnist, missalette writer, missionary to Haiti and Jamaica, prison ministry leader, and PSR teacher and Eucharistic Minister at St. Gabriel's Parish. He lives in St. Louis, MO with his two dogs who are allowed to sleep on the bed if their paws are dry.

**Description of Retreat Day:** "The Healing Power of Forgiveness: 25 Timeless Techniques. Learn to forgive others, or yourself — or God — and discover the freedom to live, laugh, and love again! Join us for this life-changing presentation at IL Ritiro Franciscan Retreat Center in Dittmer, MO on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017. He will give the first 30 registrations a signed copy of his new book: [How to Forgive Anyone For Anything](#). Mass will be at 10:00 am in the Our Lady of Cedars Chapel, Lunch at 11:00 am and the Retreat begins at Noon in the Chapel. Bring a spouse, relative, neighbor, or friend. Registration is required. For details to register check the website [www.il-ritiro.org](http://www.il-ritiro.org) and you will find all the Details under Programs. You could also, call IL Ritiro and ask to be e-mailed a Flyer for all of the details 636-274-0554.

Our next newsletter will discussing the importance of Compassion and the way we have witnessed the act of or the lack of compassion in our world or the world around us.



*"We have to renew once again our total dependence on the Higher Power. This is not just a notional acknowledgment of our need. We feel it from the very depths of our being. Something in us causes our whole being to cry out, "Help!" That's when the steps begin to work. The steps are really an engagement in an ever-deepening relationship with God. Divine love picks us up when we sincerely believe nobody else will. We then begin to experience freedom, peace, calm, equanimity, and liberation from cravings for what we have come to know are damaging."*

- Thomas Keating, *Divine Therapy and Addiction*



## Upcoming Retreats

<u>Retreat Name</u>		<u>Date</u>
How to Forgive Anyone for Anything	Frederick Hermann	Apl 30
<u>A Blazing Light of Heaven</u>	Dorothy LeBeau	May 6

### Private Retreats Can Be Scheduled Anytime

IL RITIRO offers scholarships to help those in difficult situations care for their spiritual lives. Call us at 636-274-0554

## Additional Web Resources

The intention of the e-newsletter is to provide a resource for the spiritual life and a place for people to share their personal experience, which serves as a spring board for others. We invite your comments, suggestions, and personal reflections. Use the following links to start a thread on our [Community Forums](#), or to send us an [email](#). In addition, see our website for additional [recovery resources](#).

Learn more about our [e-newsletter contributors](#).

### Form the humble Director

Our apology for the timing of this issue. We are making some changes which should make our newsletter better for communicating between Il Ritiro and you our readers.



Do you know where this statue is located?

