
The power of forgiveness

The ongoing economic and social crisis, one that will unfortunately not be short-lived, is exacerbating growing forms of individualism and aggressiveness. Worries and fears fuel social tensions in the workplace, in households, even in leisure venues. This summer we see "grim passions" hitting the headlines every day. Hatred in various shapes and forms, both spoken and unspoken are increasing, and grudges are increasingly turning into vendettas. Today, those who hate, those who isolate themselves in resentment, are those who feel they are not loved, understood, or listened to. This vicious cycle, if left unchecked, expands and contaminates more than a virus, disrupting the social fabric. Saint Francis must have experienced a similar laceration at the time of the Crusades, when the Church promised plenary indulgence to those who joined, he asked a full pardon for all in the small church of the Portiuncula: "I pray Thee that all those who repented and confessed their sins and who come to visit this church, be granted full and generous pardon, with a complete forgiveness of all sins". At these words, sources tell us, the Lord revealed himself to him, surrounding him with a beam of light. It was the sign that Francis conveyed to the Pope from whom he obtained permission to pardon anyone who visited the Portiuncula. Thus was born the Day of Pardon of Assisi, which over time was to spread throughout all Christian parishes.

To forgive is not a sign of weakness or cowardice.

It is a gesture that requires courage, strength, vision. Neither does it mean simply forgetting the wrongs, wiping out the past. It means mending the wounded soul, offering the possibility of a stronger, more life-giving way of being together. During his recent journey to Canada, Pope Francis made a plea for forgiveness for the "Body of Christ wounded in the flesh of our indigenous brothers and sisters." It was not the first time the Pope asked forgiveness for the past sins of the Church, taking upon himself the responsibility for the wrong done. "I express my deep shame and sorrow, and, together with the bishops of this country, I renew my request for forgiveness for the wrong done by so many Christians to the Indigenous peoples." In contrast to an ideological reconstruction of history, the risk of cancel culture, the pardon sought by Pope Francis is a request for rebuilding a shared past that does not forget, but which is able to look ahead together, to a world where we can rediscover ourselves as brothers and sisters.

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