

Forgiveness, Sacrifice, and the Transformation of the Self

For some, forgiveness is as difficult to receive as it is to give. Feelings of unworthiness, shame, and an inability to forgive oneself. All of these things create within us a kind of inward struggle that can prevent us from experiencing the peace that forgiveness has to offer.

This inward struggle often arises because, although we may understand forgiveness intellectually as necessary for preserving community, our hearts remain bound to past wounds, failures, and offenses.

Without forgiveness, liberty remains only an idea. When we continually rehearse past wrongs—whether committed by us or against us—we become enslaved by resentment, regret, anger, and fear. Such rumination can destabilize the mind, burden the emotions, and weaken the spirit. Forgiveness, then, is not merely an act we offer another person. It is also a pathway toward freedom, healing, and spiritual wholeness.

Jesus teaches this truth clearly in the parable of the unforgiving servant. When asked how often one should forgive, Jesus makes clear that forgiveness is not to be measured, counted, or limited. It must be offered again and again. The parable reminds us that, just as God forgives us generously, we too are called to forgive without restriction. Divine forgiveness is boundless, and those who receive it are invited to become instruments of that same mercy in the world.

Yet Jesus goes beyond teaching forgiveness in parable. In obedience to the will of God, He offered His life on the cross so that the world might be liberated from the burdens of sin, injustice, estrangement, and spiritual

bondage. In the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, forgiveness was made manifest. The cross reveals that divine love is not passive. It is sacrificial, redemptive, and willing to suffer for the liberation of others.

It is therefore not unreasonable for people of faith to crucify the ego and present themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God. What makes us acceptable in the eyes of God is not worldly status, wealth, or personal achievement, but the love we have for God and for one another. To sacrifice for love's sake is a noble choice. It is, as Scripture teaches, our reasonable service.

Those who become propagators of love do so through the mercy of God. God calls humanity to kindness, empathy, compassion, and the forsaking of the destructive ways of the world. We are called to live according to the Golden Rule: to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This is not a shallow or easy practice. Kindness requires discipline. Compassion requires spiritual strength. Forgiveness requires patience, humility, and courage.

When we practice these virtues with sincerity and perseverance, we step more fully into the truth of who we are through the grace of God. We begin to see that transformation is not merely about changing our behavior; it is about becoming new. It is about witnessing the revolution of the soul as it moves toward transcendence. It is about becoming more Christ-like—beings renewed in the image of God.

The lives of faithful people make this transformation visible. We may see it in the service and sacrifice of our Most Reverend Mother Marina and His

Eminence ABK, who bear the weight of building and sustaining this institution so that others may find belonging, fellowship, and community. Their labor reminds us that love is not only spoken; it is carried. It is demonstrated through commitment, responsibility, and sacrifice for the well-being of others.

We may also see this principle in the life of Saint John Coltrane; who chose to create and play music that would uplift people, and bring joy and healing to the world.

The music of SJC is more than an artistic expression; it is an offering. Even a *“Humble offering to Him, a chance to say Thank you God.”* This music—the anointed sound of John Will I Am Coltrane is to the world—even as his name sake John— Gift of God. Giving to people exactly what they need. Coltrane life choices culminated in such a way that he became a demonstrated of the transforming power of selfless love.

In each of these examples, transformation is not separate from struggle. The work of becoming is often difficult because it calls us to confront the ego, release bitterness, and surrender the desire to retaliate or remain wounded. Yet this is the work before us: to be made anew, to move beyond the limitations of the old self, and to allow our souls to evolve toward transcendence.

Jesus, fully human and fully divine, became the final sacrifice of blood, offering the world a way out of injustice, indifference, and our personal hang-ups.

The One crucified on the cross was and is the greatest friend the world has ever known. His sacrifice shines a light on the art of forgiveness and reveals that a dying world can find new life through the death of the ego.

The crucifixion of self is a battle won through forgiveness. When we receive God's grace, forgive ourselves, and forgive those who trespass against us, the personal self—the wounded, defensive, resentful self—and the ego are offered up. In their place, room is made for a new and transcendent being: one who recognizes the interconnection of all things and understands that no person is separate from the beloved community of God.

John Coltrane, then, can be understood as an answer to the prayer and example of Christ. Jesus, for the sake of humanity, did not withhold the love of God from the world. For love's sake, He gave His life as a witness to the greatness of God's love. Likewise, through his conscious choice to create beauty, healing, and goodness for others, Coltrane's consciousness became increasingly aligned with the consciousness of the Son and, therefore, with the mind of God.

The great questions of life remain: Who am I? Why am I here? Am I doing all that I can to be worthy of Thee, O Lord?

Forgiveness helps us to live faithfully within these questions. Our ability to forgive and to surrender the false ego is not merely an external act; it is a profound inward process. It liberates consciousness from the chains of resentment, anger, shame, and regret.

When we choose forgiveness and the contrition of our hearts, we can then free ourselves from the weight of past wrongs. We make room for mental clarity, emotional healing, spiritual maturity, peace, and resilience.

As we reflect on this call, let us embrace forgiveness as a transformative force in our lives.

Forgiveness frees us from bitterness, strengthens our communities, and aligns us with the will of God. May we strive to forgive as we have been forgiven. May we cultivate peace and justice in our hearts, our homes, and our community.

“For us, the whole globe is community.”

—John Coltrane