

FORGIVENESS
Atonement and Reparation

By
Metropolitan Archbishop Paul, S.S.B. (Ret.)

God's heart, which is broken by those who reject His love, is healed when one of us receives and accepts His love. One who receives and accepts God's love, in the immolation of the person in God's love, not only reciprocates in love to and for God, but also, like Christ, extends love to everyone. When the love they extend is rejected, their hearts are broken, but when the love they extend is received and accepted, their heart is healed.

God's Love is so powerful that purification is made perfect in love and can or may occur in this life without the necessity of purification in the hereafter - though purification in the hereafter seems to be the norm according to Saint Paul and Saint Peter.

However it may be from individual to individual, it is obvious that atonement and reparation find their perfection in love . . . And you should be able to determine (figure out) what that means.

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The divine dynamic of love was totally evident in a compressed manner during the Crucifixion. Jesus poured out His love upon the two thieves who were being crucified with Him. Gestas, the thief on His left, rejected that love with mockery. Saint Dismas accepted that love, expressing it first in his response to Gestas, when he said, “Neither dost thou fear God, seeing; thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done no evil,” Saint Dismas was in effect telling Gestas: “You know what Jesus has done and taught. You know He is goodness incarnate. Do not be foolish and hard of heart. Accept Jesus, His works, His teachings, and His love. This is our last chance.” And then Saint Dismas acts on his own advice, and accepting Jesus’ works, teachings, and Love says, “Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.”

In accepting the love Jesus extended to him, Saint Dismas extended love to Gestas. This extending of love received from Christ, to others, is a divinely natural result of accepting love from and reciprocating love to God. The reciprocation extends to all others.

The effects are bewilderingly magnificent. Saint Dismas, in effect, asked Jesus to let him live in a small hut outside the walls of His palace. Jesus, instead, brought Saint Dismas into His palace - into His mansion.

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GLOBAL SPIRITUAL WARMING

[1]

Bartholomew, the Patriarch of Constantinople - the Greek Orthodox Church, and Frances, Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, both have expressed great concerns regarding the natural or physical world environment, and especially global warming.

These concerns have a parallel which is very informative. But as regards their physical / natural world concerns, we will not even begin to explore the pros and cons of their position, and will limit our comments to two, brief statements. First, the Divine directive regarding all of creation is that we humans are to be husbandmen of all of creation. Not preservationists, but husbandmen. Second, the global temperature is not static. Global warming and cooling are only minutely influenced by human activity, being influenced to a much greater degree (pun intended) by solar activity and geological factors.

The parallel with which we actually are concerned, and over which humans actually do have a great influence, is the **spiritual** aspect of the physical world - the world in which we live in this life. Not the Divine hereafter, which is totally under God's control. Rather, the spiritual of the here and now, which God has placed in our custody to be brought into more perfect union with Him as we utilize

OUR ACCEPTING THE LOVE CHRIST HAS FOR US HEALS HIS HEART WHICH WE HAVE BROKEN

**For that Divine to Human, Human to Divine
and Human to other Human, love, is perfection
in forgiveness, reparation, and atonement.**

[8]

The two thieves who were executed with Christ were going to be executed by crucifixion because of their crimes. Jesus was added to the execution process by His own arrangements. Realizing Jesus was added by His own arrangement is very important. It was the linchpin of atonement and reparation, which were validated in His resurrection.

The enormity of this event is too immense for creatures to contemplate even in small segments. There is, however, a reality which encompasses all of the events which made salvation available, and all of the human life of Christ. That reality is the singularity simplicity of the complete, total, unreserved, and yes reckless Love which is God's Love for us.

God acts on His love for us without reservation, without regard as to whether or not we will accept His love, act on His love, or, even seek to harm Him using His love as a weapon or an avenue by which we attack Him. In God, love and acting on that love, are inseparably the same.

commit sin of some sort. But you will realize there are many of those situations wherein you did not sin. You will begin to thank God for your not having sinned on that occasion. One who does this will quickly begin to like being able to thank God, and like not having sinned. Of course, one must give God the credit, otherwise one will commit one of the sins of pride. But one can properly be happy for having worked with the Grace God made available to them at that time, and, again, thank God for helping them to accept and work with the Grace God gave them.

All these and more phenomenal, good, and holy benefits are born in a simple, “Thank You God.” Plus one which may not be readily apparent. The simple, “Thank You God”, and every improvement in holiness, also makes some reparation and atonement for the one who tells God, “Thank You”, and for all other sins and sinners.

A simple “Thank You” can go a long, long, way.

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God’s gifts to us to bring **ourselves** into union with Him.

Our **spiritual** world **actually is** experiencing global warming. And that global warming is being caused by human activity. It is being caused by the fires of Hell which are burning in the hearts of men and women in ever increasing numbers. Those fires of Hell burning in the hearts of men and women also are causing spiritual pollution which effects everyone at least to some extent, and severely adversely effects the greater portion of humankind.

If we are to be successful in doing our part in working with Jesus Christ, and actually with The Blessed Trinity, to rectify this situation, we must realistically assess the situation - which we have done -, use the tools which God has given to us to determine whether or not other people, such as government officials and corporate managers, are contributing to the problem or, are attempting to rectify the problem, all while studiously avoiding the error of the Pharisee.

The Pharisee in the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, was extraordinary in his devotional practices, going far beyond the requirements of the Torah. His greatest error was in assessing his own holiness, assessing the holiness of the Publican, and concluding he was the more holy of the two.

One approach to countering the spiritual global

warming and pollution is to attempt to demonstrate the benefits of following God's instructions. Each of us should be demonstrating this in our own lives, which gives us the opportunity to demonstrate God's mercy because we constantly fail in our attempts to be holy. When the opportunity arises we should be prepared to and should actually engage in discussions which support this position. But we quickly discover not only are those who promote acceptance of their own favorite sins not willing to discuss anything other than that others accept their engagement in their favorite sins, they also are unwilling to acknowledge their favorite sins cause harm, or that following God's way is beneficial.

Just as we do not abandon prayer even though we acknowledge the effectiveness of prayer often depends on the free will of those who are the subject of the prayers, so too should we not abandon this approach, for God has not abandoned this approach.

But God - Jesus Christ - used and uses another approach to which we often give lip service, and in which we usually only occasionally engage, but which actually will clean up the spiritual pollution which effects those who engage in this approach. It also has the potential of cleaning up the spiritual pollution effecting many others, but while that is a potential, it absolutely will clean up the spiritual pollution of those who engage in this approach.

From the initial, "Thank You, God," to this point perhaps less than one or two seconds have passed. If you thank God consistently every day at bedtime you will soon be visited by thoughts of the instances where you were not as good or as holy as you could have been, and perhaps thoughts about some sins you committed during that day.

Perhaps you fussed at someone, when you could have as easily, or even more easily, forgiven them, even forgiven them without their knowing you forgave them. You can thank God for that knowledge and attempt to use the guidance He has provided to you in that encounter. Or maybe you did not fuss at someone who had a good fussing coming to them; then you have something for which to thank God, for somewhere along the line you began the forgiveness of them, of the miscreant.

When these things begin you have begun a sustainable and easy form of examination of conscience, without realizing it, and without having to go through all the procedures the writers of profound theological thoughts correctly recommend. It is a simple alternative geared to the everyday person. And it requires less than a minute, all begun by thanking God.

Then, something amazing often happens.

When you thank God every evening you soon realize there are occasions wherein you often

think, “Yeah, thanks for the lost job, the bills, the eviction notice, the children throwing up, that idiot in the White House, all the crooks in Congress, the demons that pass for Judges, and the leaky roof. At least I will not have to try to fix the roof after the Sheriff evicts us.”

But the initial verbalization of, “Thank You”, will prompt your subconscious to bring forth a multitude of things which occurred just that day for which you actually are thankful.

Perhaps you are in jail, and that day was the day you had your one hour a week outside in the prison yard; and it was nice. Or there was toilet paper for you to use.

If you are a raggedy, smelly, unkempt, stinky, bum, did someone smile to you today, or tell you, “Hello”, give you a sandwich, or a dollar? Certainly any one of these is disserving of a, “Thank You, God.”

In all probability: most of your bodily functions worked properly throughout most of the day; most or all of the mechanical devices which you use operated within reasonable limits; each of these being disserving of its own individual, “Thank You”. The thoughts for thinking of those things which worked requires a nanosecond, and is covered within the time required to voice, “Thank You”, once or twice.

We will gradually introduce this approach, and so do indirectly at first, with a simple example, leaving more complete development for the future.

If you were to discover trash spread across your front yard, or, if you live in apartment, in the hall by your front door, that trash would be pollution. You probably would attempt to determine how the trash got there, and perhaps even attempt to have the persons responsible clean it up. But if it seemed that would be a lengthy process you probably would clean it up yourself and then attempt to go after the ones responsible.

Cleaning up the physical mess in your front yard is repairing the environment of your front yard. It is a form of reparation. It does not correct the problem of someone spreading trash around, and may not prevent someone again spreading trash around your front yard. But you clean it up because it is your front yard, and you attempt to prevent someone from trashing your yard again. Of course, if you are the one who trashed your own front yard, then you have a different problem, but the clean-up situation remains the same.

This is the beginning of cleaning up the spiritual pollution which is making mankind spiritually ill even unto spiritual death. That we clean our own spiritual front yard of spiritual filth.

We may have placed that filth there ourselves, or it may have been spread around by others, or a

combination of both. If it was brought in by others, and against our desires, we may be of the opinion the repairs are not our responsibility - that those who are responsible for the filth should clean it up.

But that is not the example we receive from Jesus Christ. Though He was not responsible for the filth and corruption caused by sin, He took on the responsibility of cleaning up the filth, and correcting the spiritual environment, by becoming the supreme sacrificial victim and offering, thereby making reparation and atonement for our sins and the spiritual filth and pollution we created.

If we are to be true followers of Christ we also must make reparation and atonement for the sins of others, as well as for our own sins. Those who declare it is impossible for a human to make meaningful atonement and reparation for sins, or that it is not necessary because Jesus already accomplished that, are in error.

It is because Jesus offered Himself as the supreme sacrificial victim, that we are able to join our efforts for atonement and reparation to the offering of Jesus, and thereby participate in the making of that reparation and atonement.

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the rest of our lives, and for all eternity with God in Heaven.

During the course of a normal day we will experience numerous occasions which should be accompanied by a, "Thank You," to God. But, being generally unappreciative and thoughtless creatures, we may not be aware of or appreciate that a "Thank You" is appropriate at the time. After all, when one is faced with an unexpected financial expense, it is not likely one will be in the mood to express thanks. But even if one is not financially able to have a repair made, at least one had use of what ever it is that needs repair. And one should be thankful for that. And if one is able to have the repair made, one should also be thankful for that ability, and that what ever it is which was in need of repair is or will be repaired.

We can twist our tongue in knots attempting to explore the various possibilities and probabilities wherein a thank you is appropriate.

We do have an alternate method which is much simpler, although it begins as an after the fact method. That method is to tell God, "Thank You," at bedtime, as part of our before sleep prayers - even after going to bed.

Just verbally tell God, "Thank you". If you have had a particularly bad day, or week, month, year, or several years, you may initially wonder for what do you have to be thankful. You may actually

**DO YOU THANK GOD? DO YOU *TELL* HIM
“THANK YOU”?**

[7]

A question we should ask ourselves is, “Do I thank God?”. Not the thank you contained in various prayers in various liturgies. Not the thank you which accompanies profound thoughts and realities, such as our own having been created, and the opportunity God gives each of us to attain eternal happiness in union with God.

Not these, but, rather, the simple thank you one may use in everyday encounters. And do we actually, vocally, say, “Thank You,” or at the very least think, “Thank You”?

The writers of profound theological thoughts correctly advise us to thank God before every Divine Liturgy: to thank Him for our praying and participating in that Divine Liturgy and the holiness, strengthening, and benefits it bestows upon and makes available to us. But those writers of profound theological advice often neglect the secondary effects of thanking God. One of those secondary effects, when we thank God before Divine Liturgy, is the prompting which God gives to us, to ask God to help us pray and participate in that Divine Liturgy, holily. This in turn may prompt us to ask God to help us not only pray and participate in that Divine Liturgy holily, but to also ask His assistance in being holy all of that day, all

**REPAIRS ARE PART OF NORMAL
MAINTENANCE**

[2]

People mentally and sometimes even physically moan and groan whenever the words reparation and atonement for sins are spoken. When instructed and advised to pray, or to pray for sinners, or that sin will be overcome, or that people will turn to God, or attempt to follow Christ’s teachings, or to be holy, there usually is no moaning or groaning. Those admonitions have been made so often they just pass in one ear and out the other, or bounce off the skull of the one who should be listening; but apparently they are, occasionally at least, heard . . . And sometimes acted upon.

But reparation and atonement for sins seem to elicit groans and moans.

Those moans and groans are produced under demonic influence; in response to Satan’s influence. This is because what Jesus Christ our God and Brother did in making Himself the Supreme Sacrificial Offering and offering Himself as this Sacrifice in His passion and death on the Cross, what He did was to make reparation and atonement for our sins. In so doing He made it again possible for humans to establish a harmonious relationship with God, and to attain eternal salvation in eternal union with God in

Heaven.

The Devil does not want us to access what Jesus Christ made available to us. Rather, the Devil wants us to go to Hell for all eternity.

When we engage in reparation and atonement for sins, we participate in the act of eternal salvation which Jesus Christ did. In so doing we also repair, even if it just a little, some of the damage caused by sin. When we make those repairs the damage before the repairs becomes more strikingly obvious because the damage is now repaired or partially repaired. If the damage is again inflicted after the repairs have been made, the evil of those who caused the damage is made more obvious.

The Devil does not want that to happen either.

The most simple physical world example of this spiritual world repair is the exterior wall of a building which has had vulgar, threatening, graffiti spray painted on it. When it first appears those who regularly pass by the building are somewhat shocked, but they soon become accustomed to the disfigurement. Usually the graffiti spreads to other buildings, and when a stranger passes by the stranger will be under the impression the neighborhood reflects the graffiti. That impression may or may not be accurate.

If the graffiti is cleaned off the wall before other walls are disfigured the cleaning will immediately

with a blow so severe it will cause him to vomit in painful loss of all he has gained in his Seinfeld Culture nothing campaign of emptiness, then, simply, Love.

Those TV show contestants whose faces cry out that you just like them, let your heart go out to them and love them. Let your mind and thoughts dwell on them for a little while, and tuck in a quick prayer for them.

Be nice to people. Being nice is the aspect of love which requires the least exertion and virtually no preparation or thought. The same for being courteous.

Give good example. Good example is one of the most important things that love does. And it is accomplished simply by doing and avoiding what God has instructed us to do and to avoid.

These simple things can totally destroy the Seinfeld Culture, and repair the damage it has caused. And that is a form of reparation and atonement to which no one, other than those who are evil, should have objection.

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Those who disagreed, or who thought the show was a waste of time, or stupid, or boring, or anything other than superlative, were branded as ignorant, unsophisticated, intellectually deficient or inferior, and incapable of appreciating the intellectual and sophisticated qualities of the show.

Actually, the show's supporters were and are the ones who are deficient. But one must admit Seinfeld taught its lesson and message well, influencing a multitude to abandon love, and to embrace selfishness, meanness, nastiness, and . . . ***NOTHING.***

That love would be replaced with nothing is a major accomplishment of Satan - probably an accomplishment far beyond his most extreme expectations and hopes. The selfishness, meanness, and nastiness are mere garnishments to the major entrée of nothing.

This Seinfeld Culture is empty. Its practitioners and members are empty. They also are bored. Selfishness, meanness, and nastiness are inadequate fillers of the Seinfeld Culture emptiness. The members of this culture attempt to fill the emptiness by pursuing every form of self satisfaction and self indulgence, and every form harm first to others and eventually, in many instances, to themselves.

If you wish to kick the devil in the tender parts

be noticed. That cleaning may prevent other walls from being similarly disfigured. If the wall is again disfigured the neighbors will immediately notice, and the re-disfigurement may induce the neighbors to attempt to stop the spread of the graffiti. The same is true if several walls have been disfigured and attempts are made to clean them up.

But even if the neighbors do nothing to stop the spread of graffiti, if the building owner diligently attempts to keep the building in good appearance, and goes to the extent of employing security to discover the identity of the vandals - who are criminals and sinners - and prosecutes them criminally and sues them for monetary recompense, even if he is not successful in criminal and civil action, if he continues to make the necessary repairs he will assist in the repair of the neighborhood as well.

That is analogous to what our making atonement and reparation does in both the spiritual and the physical world.

Some people experience aggravation at just the thought of having to make atonement and reparation for the sins of others. Their attitude is, "Why should I have to do that. They committed the sins, so why should I have to make up for them."

If that had been Our Lord's attitude there would be noticeably fewer people in Heaven.

When we make reparation and atonement for sins, even to the most minute extent, we improve our spiritual environment as well as our own spiritual selves.

To the extent we fail to or do not attempt to make reparation and atonement, our spiritual selves, spiritual environment, and physical / social environment deteriorate not in direct proportions but in geometric proportions. An entire culture can quickly go to Hell in a hand basket because no one prayed just one Our Father (The Lord's Prayer) in an attempt to make atonement and reparation.

While greater spiritual substance may result from special acts of reparation and atonement, special acts are not necessary. Ordinary participation in Divine Liturgy is a viable means of making reparation and atonement. One need simply make these a part of their intentions at the beginning of Divine Liturgy, or occasionally focus on a particular prayer - any prayer - during Divine Liturgy with these intentions. And receiving Holy Communion in reparation and atonement for sins, one's own and those of others, will reap great benefit.

This is not difficult.

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sole culture, but the predominant culture.

The predominant culture of today should be named The Seinfeld Culture. Seinfeld is a TV sitcom, now in syndication, which originally was broadcast from 1989 through 1998. The episodes generally were loosely based on everyday events in the lives of Jerry Seinfeld and his friends. Basically it was about nothing. The characters really did nothing; each was concerned mainly about and for his or her own self; selfishness, meanness, and nastiness were the foundation character traits; and since there was no driving force ever exhibited by any character, selfishness, meanness, and nastiness were the basis for what ever it was that passed for or replaced driving force *in all of the entire show*. Love rarely or never made an appearance, and rarely or never was a factor, not even self love. In several episodes the characters boldly proclaimed the show, w_a_s a_b_o_u_t n_o_t_h_i_n_g.

It therefore makes sense that today's predominant culture be named The Seinfeld Culture.

The show was and is a favorite of critics and the self proclaimed intellectuals, sophisticates, upper echelon, and elite of that time, and those of today. Seinfeld in general, and for specific episodes, was named by these as, variously, the greatest television program of all time, the greatest episodes of all time, the best written TV series of all time.

THE SEINFELD CULTURE of nothing and emptiness

[6]

Love is sorely missing universally in today's human culture. Oh, it can be found in isolated instances and examples: some spouses will occasionally give their spouse a hug, a parent will occasionally place a protective arm around their child, donations continue to be made to Saint Vincent de Paul Societies and other charities, prayers continue to be offered for those perceived as being in need, kindness and gentleness continue to be expressed. But in today's culture they are noticed because they are uncommon, while within the memories of the middle aged they were common.

The perception of being loved also is not as prevalent as it once was, and the perception of love as existing also is generally missing, both perceptions being accurate. A perceptive individual is able to confirm this, for they will readily recognize the desperate desire just to be liked on the faces of many of the contestants in the dancing, singing, and other televised contests which are common. And also in the faces of those people in the grocery store.

With what has love been replaced? Nothing. Love has been replaced with nothing. And this is the predominant culture of today. Not the exclusive or

FASTING IN "LITTLE BATCHES" CAN "MAKE A LOT OF CURE"

[3]

We obtain mental and spiritual enlightenment regarding different aspects of making reparation and the application of making reparations, not just from exploration of Our Lord's making reparation and atonement for our sins through His Sacrifice of Himself, but also through examining human history.

A prime, modern example is the aftermath of World War I and the different aftermath of World War II.

After World War I, Germany was forced to make reparations for the war. That proved to be impossible, and Germany was driven into virtual bankruptcy concurrent with unimaginable inflation. These contributed to the rise of NAZI'ism, and the subsequent World War II. After World War II, Germany was not forced to make reparations. Instead, America developed the Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program, ERP), which reconstructed those portions of Germany and Europe not under Soviet control. Germany was thus stabilized and eventually able to meet its own needs and assist with the needs of the entire world.

General Marshall's plan actually followed major

aspects of Our Lord's making reparation and atonement for the sins of humankind, and the reestablishment of Divine - human relationships, as well as providing the ability for humankind and each individual human to attain eternal salvation.

From this we are taught the important lesson that forced reparations are fruitless. We are further taught that voluntary reparations made by the injured party - who has no obligation to make reparations for the injured party committed no wrong - voluntary reparations made by the injured party on behalf of the party which caused the injury, when graciously accepted by the party which caused the injury, bears substantial fruit.

General Marshall must have been Orthodox, or at least influenced by the True Church [:-) smiley face], because the plan he devised follows and parallels much of what Our Lord established in overcoming Evil and making eternal salvation available to every human being.

Only the God - Man Jesus Christ could make reparation and atonement for the sins of mankind and open the doors to eternal salvation. In participating in the life Jesus made available to each of us, we are able to participate in the spiritual reconstruction of the world.

If we fail, totally fail, to participate in the spiritual and moral reconstruction of the world, then we will not be fully participating in the eternal

do and to avoid, and try to comply.

If you entertain the thought that this Baptism stuff just is not worth all the baggage which accompanies it, just remember, it is easier to cross the Atlantic by boat or airplane, than it is to try to swim.

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and material influences. The rest of the Sacraments, especially Confession and Absolution, The Sacred Eucharist, and Holy Anointing, are there to assist us.

But we were not created to simply get our own sorry individual selves into Heaven. We were also created to unite all of creation into union and harmony with God.

How do we do that? How are we supposed to do that? By doing what Jesus did. By living in harmony with God's instructions and will, which includes not just doing some things and not doing other things, but also making reparation and atonement for sins, not just ours but those of all others as well.

Think of the world as being an house. The person who writes an obscenity with Roundup on your front lawn is like someone tossing coffee grounds around the kitchen of the house - world. Your sins are like tossing tennis balls down the toilet of the house - world. Both create a mess. You can not have God visit that house with that mess, so each of us has to try to clean up the mess. Not fair, you say! You think you should only have to clean up the toilet mess? Jesus did not make any of the mess. Yet He died to clean up the mess.

So, if you are Baptized, get out the cleaning supplies so you can make reparation and atonement; and also learn what God wishes us to

salvation which Jesus has made available to us. Intentional failure to so participate when able so to do could easily be inimical to one's own attainment of eternal salvation. It may be that because of this failure one would not participate in eternal salvation at all!

If anyone requires being hit over the head with Biblical instructions in this, consider Psalm 68:5, ". . . My enemies are grown strong who have wrongfully persecuted me: then did I pay that which I took not away." What does that mean, what does it tell us . . . The, "I pay that which I took not away." Christ in his passion made restitution of what he had not taken away, by suffering the punishment due to our sins, and so repairing the injury we had done to God. And we, as instructed by Jesus Christ, must do likewise, even though our attempts to repair are woefully inadequate. But in the Sacred Eucharist, our efforts actually do attain some level of adequacy.

We know that prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, are standard practices in working to attain holiness. But Our Lord's example indicates suffering should be an aspect of reparation and atonement.

Almsgiving could meet this requirement, but we will only mention it at this time because the complexities are too intricate.

In the West, prayer has traditionally been given as penance in Sacramental Confession, which has

given prayer an aura of something disagreeable, something through which one must suffer. This is a shame for it has effected many of the laity, clergy, and religious, to the extent they are inclined to avoid prayer, including Divine Liturgy, whenever possible. At this time, so as to avoid compounding this perverse perception of prayer, we will merely confirm that prayer is a means of joyfully contributing to making atonement and reparation for sins.

Fasting: Fasting includes elements of suffering, may be accomplished in a manner which is not detrimental to one's health, may be accomplished spontaneously or in a planned manner, need not be complicated, and has been given to us in example by Jesus Christ Himself. It is an excellent means of making atonement and reparation for sins.

But regular fasting, such as during Great Lent, become a habit, and the intention may become clouded. Try somewhat spontaneous, "little" fasts. By way of example, if the grocery store has Little Sizzler sausage links on sale, five boxes for one dollar each, do not buy them this time. Fast from them instead, offering the fasting in atonement and reparation for sins.

Watching TV and desire a snack. Put off the snack for an hour, or skip it entirely, offering the delay or abstinence from the snack - a fast from the snack - in atonement and reparation for sins.

God because God was the One offended. Hence, Jesus Christ, both totally Divine and totally Human, Who offered Himself as the Supreme Sacrificial Offering, in atonement and reparation for the sins of Mankind. In that process He taught us The Way, and gave us numerous aids. Chief amongst these aids are the Seven Sacraments, the entry into union with God Sacrament being that of Baptism.

Can a person make it to Heaven without being Baptized. Sure, but it might be easier to swim across the Atlantic Ocean from North America to Europe. Why swim when you can take a boat, or an airplane?

If a person dies immediately after being Baptized that person goes directly to Heaven because they have been made perfectly Holy through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Why does the Holiness not last? Does it wear off? No, it does not wear off. It does not last because we shake it off. Remember, Humans are designed to develop. In the course of developing we sometimes decided to be in harmony with God's desires and instructions, and sometimes decided to be otherwise, like the fallen Angels decided to be otherwise. But our decisions are not made with the benefit of creature perfect knowledge and understanding. Human decisions are made with developing knowledge and understanding, formed in an intellect easily distracted by both spiritual

characters and personalities. Some decided to be what they were created to be and some decided to be otherwise. The ones who decided to be otherwise were cast into Hell which was created for them. They did not get a second chance because having perfect creature knowledge and understanding, when an Angel makes a decision the Angel does not change its decision.

Somewhere along the line God created the physical universe in which we live, and created us Humans to live in that physical universe. Part of the plan was that eventually we would be instrumental in bringing ourselves and all of creation into perfect union with God. He made us immortal like the Angels, but unlike the Angels we were not created as pure spirits but as a combination of spirit, soul, and physical body - often shortened in reference to simply body and soul. And while God also gave each of us free will, God did not endow us with perfect creature intellect, knowledge, understanding, and the other qualities He gave in perfection to the Angels. He made us in a manner which allowed each of us to grow, learn, develop, change, make decisions and change them, and so time began to run.

Of course the first Humans messed up their special relationship with God, and almost every Human since then has done likewise to some extent. If the Human - God relationship were to be corrected a God - Human Person was required: a Human because it is Humans who messed up things, and

One need not bleed in order to have something worth while to offer in atonement and reparation for sins. But one must do something. And in this instance, a little is much better than nothing.

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FORGIVENESS

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On Monday, August 23, 2015, Louisiana State Trooper Steven Vincent apparently stopped to render assistance to Kevin Daigle. Apparently Mr. Daigle was in the driver's seat of a pick-up truck that had left the road and had the front and rear passenger side tires in the ditch alongside the road. *Allegedly*, Mr. Daigle pointed a sawed off shotgun at and shot the Trooper in the head, then stood over the Trooper and said something that indicated Daigle thought Vincent was lucky because Vincent was going to die. The Trooper died the next day. Daigle was restrained by passersby and taken into custody.

All of the foregoing is alleged to have happened. For our purposes we will present as though all of the foregoing is proven fact, here clearly stating, for legal purposes, it is not proven fact.

Forgiveness . . . Christians are called by God, and specifically by Jesus Christ, to forgive those who have wronged them. While the immediate and overwhelming experience of the widow and son of Steven Vincent must be mourning, bewilderment, panic, and horror all combined, hopefully revenge or its desire is not amongst that which they are experiencing. And more hopefully, forgiveness is a viable potential.

BAPTISM

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We are aware of three types of persons: Divine, Angelic, and Human.

The Divine is God, of Which there is but One, that One being three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost - The Blessed Trinity. From our perspective, God always was, is now, and forever shall be. From God's perspective, God is. While grammatically incorrect when applied to anyone or anything else, it is proper to state God Bees. This is because time is irrelevant to God, God eternally being self existing, eternal, and omnipotent.

It is proper to think of time as beginning with the creation of the Angels because it is our understanding Angels were the first of creation, and therefore time began. All of the Angels were given free will. It is our understanding that all of the Angels were created at the same time. But apparently time did not "run" with the creation of the Angels because the Angels were all created with perfect creature intellect, knowledge, understanding, being, nature, and everything else pertinent to being an Angel. Angels are not eternal, but they are immortal, and therefore none of them will ever cease to exist. Angels were created to glorify God, worship Him, do His bidding, and generally be in total and perfect harmony with God while remaining distinct individuals with differing

difficult for one to understand this.

Forgiveness finds its beginning in God in one's intellect as an act of one's will. It may have to drag the emotions into submission, abandoning the desire for vengeance. And it may have to drag the emotions into submission wherein it is possible to emotionally desire the eternal salvation of the one being forgiven. But that is the duty of the intellect, of the mind, of the spirit, of the soul: to rule the person into harmony with God.

The day after Steven Vincent died, on his own initiative, a Priest prayed a special Requiem Divine Liturgy for him. Included in that Divine Liturgy, after each prayer specific to the repose of the soul of Steven Vincent and for his eternal salvation, was another prayer for the eternal salvation of his murderer.

It must begin somewhere.

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We will understand why forgiveness is a hoped to be soon experience aspect of Trooper Vincent's survivors if we better understand and comprehend, and answer the question: just what is forgiveness?

One of the more traditional concepts of forgiveness is that it is an intentional and voluntary attitude and feeling by a victim regarding one who inflicts injury upon the victim, wherein the victim does not desire or seek vengeance. This is applied to the perpetrator, the offence, the infliction of the injury, and the injury itself. Forgiveness does not condone, excuse, pardon, or forget, nor does it accept the wrongdoing with which the victim has been afflicted. Forgiveness does not expect or seek restoration, restitution, compensation, nor need these be sought or offered by the offender, nor is it required the offender make any response, nor is it even necessary the offender accept the forgiveness. The one offended or injured must also at the very least not wish ill upon the perpetrator. A true follower of Christ must go beyond this, and not only wish the offender attain eternal salvation but actually attempt to assist in the offender's attainment of eternal salvation.

If this seems to be too much to ask, too much to require, too much to consider as being appropriate or attainable, consider this.

If Steven Vincent is in Heaven, or undergoing purification prior to entry into eternal union with God in Heaven, the foregoing is his attitude to and

wishes for Kevin Daigle. He may realistically wish Daigle be incarcerated for life so-as-to protect humankind. But he also wants Daigle to do and to be that which is necessary for Daigle to attain eternal salvation.

If Vincent does desire vengeance against Daigle, or his eternal damnation, or that he suffer, then Vincent either faces a prolonged and intensive purification, or he is in Hell.

Why do we state this without qualification or equivocation?

Because in the Lord's Prayer, the Our Father, Jesus instructs us to pray to the Father, “. . . forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us . . .” If we seek forgiveness of our sins, which are offenses against God, we must also grant forgiveness of offenses against us.

Forgive is what Our Lord did on the Cross. Does this mean we too must accept the commission of offenses against us? No, of course not. Jesus accepted His Passion and Crucifixion as the means by which He offered Himself as the Supreme Sacrificial Victim in reparation and atonement for our sins. If Trooper Vincent had been able to use his service firearm to stop Daigle, even if Daigle died as a result, not only would Vincent have committed no wrong, he also would have been engaged in a good act for he would have been seeking to preserve the life God has given him. He

thereby would have been able to continue as living husband and father.

When we fail to forgive, including failure to desire the attainment of eternal salvation by one who has harmed us, we carry the emotional and actual physical burden of our failure to forgive. It is a heavy burden. Desiring vengeance churns within a person, and colors their perception of everything, and adversely effects all of their relationships. Hatred is a necessary aspect of seeking vengeance, which changes a person in to an evil entity, forging chains to differing forms of evil with which the one injured or offended burdens himself unless he forgives. If only for one's general well being it is necessary to forgive those who have harmed us. And if God honors our prayer to be forgiven as we forgive, and we fail to forgive, our eternity is bleak.

Some may deem this is too much to ask of those adversely effected in this situation. It is not. Consider those who fought in World War II and their current attitude towards their former enemies. One will not only rarely find hatred, but also will be more likely to find forgiveness, and the potential for friendships between and amongst former enemies. This is because the burden of the horrors of war are almost impossible to bear, and become impossible to bear if vengeance and hatred exist. But forgiveness lifts the burden of the horrors experienced. Unless one has been there and done that, or something similar, it may be