

Dear People Whom God Loves,

## **RADICAL FORGIVENESS**

“Radical Forgiveness” is the title of a book written by Colin Tipping. I will be writing from a theological perspective that is different from the perspective of the book. The process presented in the book can be used within our traditional theology.

This perspective comes from our belief in the Blessed Trinity. The three in one. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God. Let us see how this belief can deeply influence our lives. All of our understanding is of course limited by our limited humanness and what I write is further limited by my own imperfect understanding.

That being said. We can know enough to allow the three in one to transform our lives.

We will first look at the Trinity and then see how we can incorporate the process of radical forgiveness.

Jesus says “who is good but God alone”. In the first letters of John we read “God is Love”. I think that the words good and love point to the same reality. To be God means to be goodness and love. I find it hard to capture the depth of what it means to be Goodness and Love. For me goodness and love are deeper than any other words we can use. I find it helpful not to use other words but to let the words goodness and love quietly sink in. You do it in any way that works for you.

One thing that we can say is that goodness and love are effusive, overflowing, emptying out, giving, sharing and selfless. This can give us a little insight about what it means to be God.

The Trinity tells us that while being one God, this Goodness and Love flows in and through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nothing is held back. God is this effusive communion of Goodness and Love. Please remember that my words are only weak and frail pointers to what it is to be God.

The Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, tells us that God is the source of all beings (the universe). Everything exists only because of this overflowing of Goodness and Love. Without this Goodness and Love we wouldn't be here. The universe is the overflowing of Goodness and Love.

This overflowing Goodness and Love is in humanity in a special way in Jesus. It is in all of us in a real yet different way than in Jesus. This presence is called the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This presence is in all the rest of the universe. Yet in a different way than in us humans. The presence is different but is real.

This presence of Goodness and Love is always working in us and everything to enable us to become what we are meant to be. For us humans – since we are made in the image of God – that means to be drawn into an increasingly deeper goodness and love.

It is also good to remember that Goodness and Love is working not only in and through our virtues and good decisions, but also through our mistakes, sins and bad things that happen and those bad things that are done to us. My personal experience is that Goodness and Love have worked best in me through my blunders and sins. That may sound strange to some of us, but it is my experience.

Our belief in this all pervasive Goodness and Love is fundamental to radical forgiveness.

We now turn to the steps of radical forgiveness.

The first step is to tell our story. Telling it to ourselves is good. Telling it to another person is better. It is essential that the other person is someone who is not judgmental. A judgmental person will only make matters worse. The judgmentalness only abuses us again.

We try to tell our story as honestly as we can. This is telling what actually happened. Just the facts. This is the way I was hurt. This is what was done to me. This is what happened.

The second step is to allow ourselves to feel the pain and sorrow that we have felt and still feel. To feel the pain of how this has affected my life. How this has been

behind so many bad decisions and actions in my life. We understandably want to and probably have hidden that pain from others and even from ourselves. The pain is real. It doesn't help to run away from it. We need a wise and understanding person to walk with us.

The third step to see the beliefs that we have made up as a result of the abuse or hurt. This is not to say that the abuse or hurt didn't happen or that it wasn't terrible. What happened happened. These beliefs are things that we have told ourselves. They have become truth to us even though they are false. They are running our life. They infiltrate our decisions and the way we live.

Some examples of beliefs that we have formed. "I am no good." "I am damaged goods." "I am stupid." "Everyone is out to get me." "No one could ever love me." "I am unlovable." "My life will never get better." "I'll never amount to anything." "It would have been better never to have been born." "I must do everything exactly right." "What's the use of trying?" "I'll never be good enough." "I must excel." "I must be the best." "I am superior to others." "I must be right." "It's my way or the highway." "I must always be on guard."

Notice that these beliefs take different forms. Some are self-deprecating. Some are self-exalting. Some are deflated ego. Some are inflated ego. We make up these beliefs to cope with the painful hurt or abuse. These beliefs do not mean that we are bad. They are understandable. They do however damage the way we live. They do hinder our growth into goodness and love. They do make it more difficult for us to be willing to allow Goodness and Love to draw us into goodness and love. Always remember that the image of God (our goodness and love) is in us even though it seems to be covered up and not noticed. Goodness and Love loves us no matter what state we are in.

The fourth step is to see the sting of abuse and hurt from another perspective. This in no way denies what happened nor does it diminish the reality of the pain we have suffered. It can be an opportunity to see something that has been hidden from us. It can help us to let go of seeing ourselves as defective, as worthless, as unlovable, as stupid, as hopeless or as a victim. Even when we see ourselves as superior (inflated ego) beneath that façade (whether we are aware of it or not) there is the driving force that we are not o.k. These are beliefs that we have made up. We must each recognize the false beliefs that we have made

up. These beliefs may be like what I have just written or some other negative belief.

We must remember the Goodness and Love (God) that is in us and wants our healing. This Goodness and Love cannot stop all the bad things from happening. (That is because Goodness and Love respects the freedom (though limited) of the universe including the freedom (though limited) of us humans).

That does not mean that Goodness and Love is powerless. She works through all of the sins, bad things and tragedies to help us grow and become better people. Indeed we can become better and more compassionate people because of those abuses and hurts.

These terrible things present an opportunity to learn lessons that we would learn no other way. My experience is I don't usually learn it the first time. Fortunately, we usually keep getting the opportunity over and over again. It is extremely difficult to see this while we are in crisis. Even though the abuse and hurt were terrible, bad, awful, unfair and miserable, in the big picture it is good. Sometimes I say to myself that even though it was hell at the time, I am glad it happened. If we see in the midst of our pain that it is good, our story is changed and healing and forgiveness begin to take place in us. This is the paradox. The bad becomes good. Crucifixion becomes resurrection.

Remember Goodness and Love is holding us, cherishing us and working in us all the time –whether we know it or not.

The fifth and final step is to forgive ourselves for making up the false beliefs. They made it possible for us to survive. Also to forgive ourselves for the mistakes we have made and the bad actions we have done. Seeing our mistakes and bad actions is healthy, blaming ourselves is harmful. Goodness and Love doesn't blame us. Why should we.

Remember always, Goodness and Love (God) is loving us at every moment of our lives.

Smile, God Loves You,  
Father Clay