



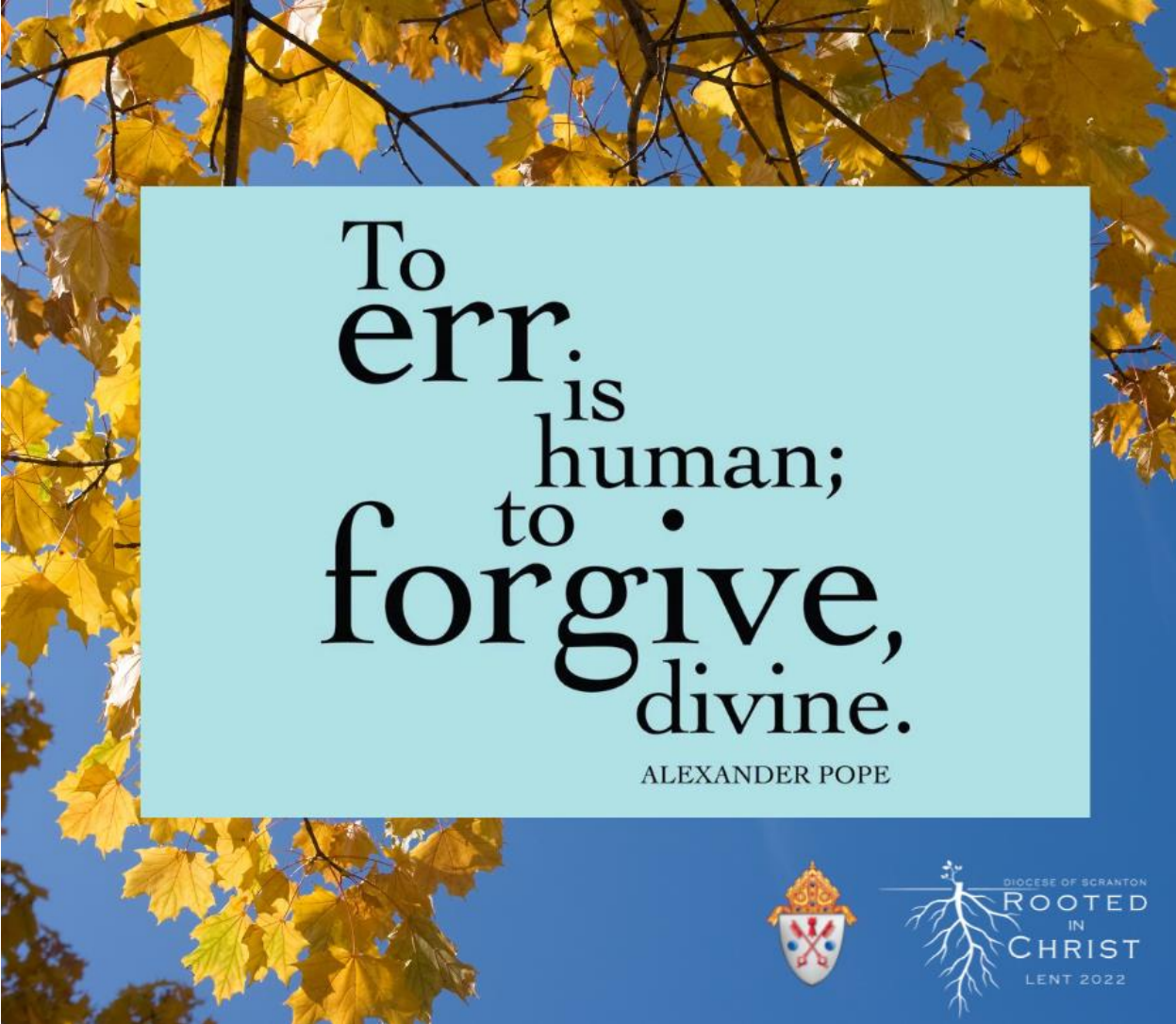
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

LENT 2022



FORGIVING *Friday*



To
err. is
human;
to
forgive,
divine.

ALEXANDER POPE



FORGIVING YOURSELF AFTER TURNING AWAY FROM GOD

"I am sorry." Are these not the toughest words to say? Are they not the most difficult words to accept? And yet, we are more than capable of giving them and receiving them. In the mystery of creation, God placed in our hearts the capacity to offend and to ask for forgiveness. Only man can offend and only man can forgive.

I'm a cradle Catholic. My Mother and Father were both Irish immigrants, my Father was Catholic and my Mother was raised Protestant, she converted to Catholicism after I was born. When I was young, Thanksgiving dinners

were interesting at best. I remember going to Kindergarten at St. Anthony's in Hawthorn, NJ, and later moving to Parsippany, where I attended St. Peter the Apostle school and made all my Sacraments. I left in 5th grade and went to public school.

My parents didn't have money for me to go to college nor did I have the grades, so I entered into the working world. My Father and my Uncle Bob sponsored me to join the Teamsters, at that time someone had to sponsor you in order to be a member. Like everyone else involved, that environment took me away from God and his Church, far away!

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12

I met my Wife Judy while on vacation in New York State. She was from Hancock, NY and, just like my Mom and Dad, Judy was Protestant. But that did not matter to me. About a year later, we were married in Judy's Church, over the objections of my Mom and Dad. Two years after our wedding my daughter Stephanie was born. Two years later, my son Joe joined the family.

I worked every day while we lived in Parsippany. I started to stop off after work for a beer, which eventually led to stopping all the time, for a lot of beers. Other activities for the Union, in addition to my drinking, took me farther away from the Church and my family. I was spending very little time with either one. As I reflect back, I would come back to the Church for important times in my life, my children getting baptized, family funerals and such.

Surprisingly, for where I was in my life, I insisted that my kids make their sacraments. My kids were enrolled at St. Peter's, where they would receive their sacraments. I remember the Pastor there, Father Flanagan, told me I could not receive communion because we were not married in the eyes of the church. That hit me hard! Again Like my parents, my wife attended

RCIA, became Catholic and we re-married in the Church.



However, I continued on the road to destruction, drinking, selfishness, putting me first, just being a wild man. When my children grew up, they both joined the Navy. Judy and I found ourselves alone once again. One day I sat and reflected on my life to that point. I felt I wasn't the best father and thought, "If I could only do it all over again, I'd do things a lot differently."

Not long after this, I took a vacation and visited my daughter Stephanie in San Diego. On my last night there, while walking down the hallway of the hotel, Steph told me she was pregnant. She was afraid to tell me because of how she thought I would react. My reaction was way different than what she thought it would be. A few months later, Steph had her son, Christopher. I was there for the birth.

After a short skirmish with the Navy, Judy and I took temporary custody of Christopher. I realized at that time that Christopher was the answer to my prayer, "If I had the chance to do it over again, I would do things differently." And I did! When Christopher was 2 years old, I came home drunk one Saturday, as usual. At that moment I saw the unconditional love Chris had, he didn't care if I was drunk or sober, a good guy or a bad guy, he just loved me. That day, I decided I didn't want him to see me like that anymore! I quit drinking that night and we started going back to Church.

*If I had the chance to do it over again,
I would do things differently.*

As I got more involved with the Church, someone mentioned that I would make a good Deacon. Would I consider that? I thought about that for a long time. Finally, I applied to the Diaconate and was turned down the first time with a letter that said, "Not at this time, maybe at a later date." Every day for 5 years I would think about it and I applied again, this time I was accepted into the program. As I progressed through the program, I realized how much God loved me and forgives and leads us. My faith deepened, I now forgive others as God forgave and continues to forgive me.

I'm not perfect and I make mistakes, a lot of them but, I come to confession and keep working at improving and through God's mercy, he forgives and, guides me. I can listen better now, I see God's hand at work in me and I listen to what he's instructing me to do. Without my grandson and God, I'm sure my life wouldn't be the same as it is now. In addition, neither would the lives of the people I've helped and spoken with. For that, each day, I thank the Lord.



Deacon Joe Rodgers is a father of two and grandfather to three beautiful grandchildren. When he is not tending to the flock at Queen of Peace Parish in Brodheadsville, he is a truck driver. Deacon Joe runs the Community Sunday Suppers at the parish and is known for homilies that help us all to see God in our everyday lives.

If you would like to hear more of Deacon Joe's moving personal witness, [click here](#)

FOR REFLECTION

Is there something in your life that is keeping you from seeking God's forgiveness?

Is there something from your past that leads you to believe that you are unworthy of God's forgiveness?

Do you believe that God can forgive us for anything?

Funding for this initiative provided by your support of the Diocese of Scranton's
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Diocese of Scranton
2021 **DIOCESAN**
ANNUAL APPEAL 

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