



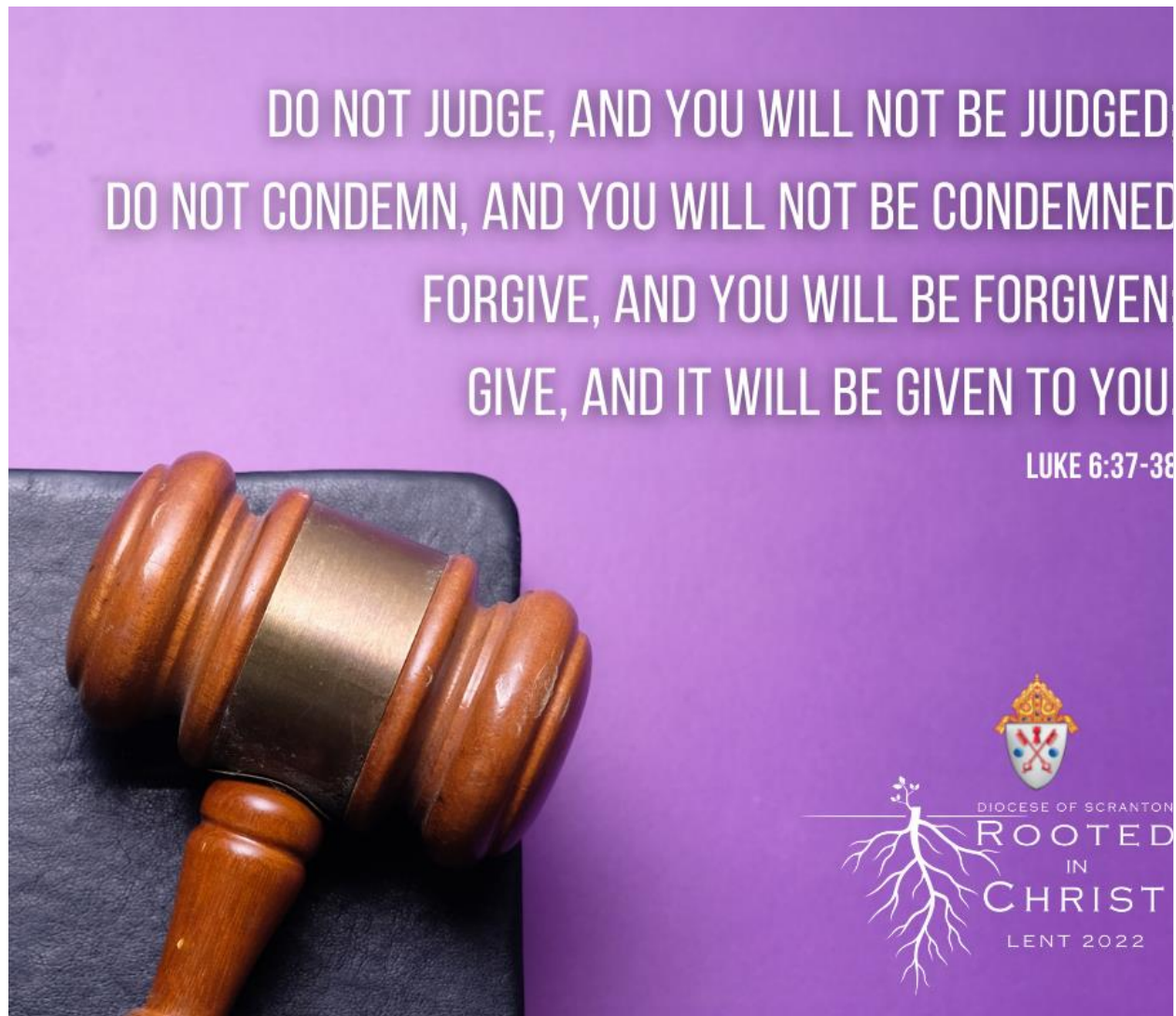
DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

LENT 2022



FORGIVING *Friday*



Forgiveness While Being Judged or Judging Others

Hi! My name is Karen McLain and I was asked to share some of my experience with judgment and forgiveness.

In many ways, I think that comes down to what we value. The judgement we make, the forgiveness we offer – We often decide about those things based on value. A couple of examples, if we have good diamond earrings, that has value! We get them with screw-on backs instead of snap on ones. It takes more time and effort to put them on, but they are much harder to lose! How about that Christmas ornament that belonged to your grandmother, then to your mother, and now it is yours. It has a special box and special paper to wrap it in. It even has a special safe place on the tree! Why? Because it has value. Even a single flower or note from your beloved that you have pressed in your Bible or journal. No real monetary value there, but great personal value and you care for it gently and protectively. We care for the things we value. We make special provision for them.

Now, let me tell you a story. Your very best friend – man or woman – is having a terrible time. Serious financial troubles, relationship problems, completely over-stressed at work, doesn't even like that job! Every decision they make is wrong, they are a failure, made every wrong choice, their behavior is not what God would want. They are fat, ugly, poor, stupid, unlovable – no one will ever want them, forgive them. Love them – they will be alone forever! They think they just aren't worth anything!

We care for things we value.

Now I know you won't let your best friend live like that! You are a good Christian friend and you are going to be loyal and loving and are going to come to their defense and encourage them, build them up, bring them hope. You'll go to the Scriptures and tell them – God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (Jn 13:17). There is therefore now NO condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:8). Those who hope in the Lord will Renew their strength, they will mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not grow weary, they shall walk and not faint (Is 40:31). And you could go on and on with Scripture reminding them of how loved, how precious, how valuable, how forgiven they are. They are the child of the Most High God! You would bring continual assurance of the grace, and mercy and forgiveness of God. You would do that for your best friend because you value them. You would do that for a sister or brother in Christ because you value them, you would do that for your family members because you value them. You would do that for yourself...

Whoa! Hold it, wait a minute. Myself? I would forgive myself? I would value myself? No, no, no, I'm not worth it. I'm no good, I am a failure in so many ways. I don't follow God closely enough. God couldn't love ME. God couldn't forgive ME. You wouldn't like me if you really knew me. How could anyone love me?

Forgive myself? Value myself? I'm not worth it.

Somehow, suddenly, when it is about us, our judgement changes, our forgiveness changes. Learning to forgive ourselves – making that choice – and forgiveness is always a choice and learning to love ourselves really is a first step in our walk with the Lord. But it's also one of those first steps we come back to over and over again. We learn how to brush our teeth early in life, when we are young, but we don't just stop doing it once we learn how! We keep doing it every day, sometimes more than once a day, if we are good! Learning to forgive ourselves is no different. We first have to learn to believe that God's forgiveness is meant for us. That's why Jesus came. Then we have to choose to accept it and own it as our own. We need to learn

it early and keep doing it all our lives! Scripture tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to forgive 70 x 7 times. If we don't stop judging ourselves and learn to forgive ourselves regularly, how can we love ourselves? If we don't love ourselves, how can we then love others? Every single one of us has value to God and His love and forgiveness belong to each of us. That's what the cross is all about.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God - and such we are!" 1 John 3:1

The last encouraging Scripture I want to share is 1 John 3:1: "*See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God – and such we are!*" Every Scripture of encouragement you would share with your friend is meant for **YOU!** Every word of healing and forgiveness and peace is meant for **YOU!** **YOU** are a child of God, no different from any other person on this planet or in history. No different from Moses or Abraham or Rahab or David or Peter or Paul. (And they had some pretty "unforgiveable" moments in their lives if you remember!) You, **LIKE ALL OF US**, are a sinner, saved by grace and beloved of God. The child of the King of Kings and **YOU** have great value!

So as with everything that has value, take care of yourself as the precious child you are to God. Build yourself up and bring hope to yourself. Forgive yourself, don't shame yourself, don't tear down, don't belittle, do not pass judgment. Defend yourself from all that would come against you with the truth of Scripture and the great love of God! Rest when that is what you need. Call someone for a listening ear or shoulder to lean on when that is what you need. Step away from situations and people who do you harm. Always trust in God and in His great love and forgiveness! Have an encouraging Lent!



Karen McLain is a cradle Christian and 30+ year convert to Catholicism. She lives with her husband, Allan, in rural Madison Township in Lackawanna County. Allan is a lifelong farmer, and Karen is the Coordinator of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal for the Diocese. She previously worked for 13 years in the Main Office of Holy Cross High School in Dunmore. Karen is a member of St Catherine of Siena Parish in Moscow.

FOR REFLECTION

- Of all the people in the world, who do we tend to be hardest on when we mess up?
- If we self-forgive, aren't we just letting ourselves off the moral hook?
- What should I expect if and when I forgive myself?

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