



Fr. Peter Mermier

# Spiritual Moments



St. Francis de Sales

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Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales

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*'Be Your Best  
Give Your Best  
Do Your Best  
and  
Leave the Rest  
to the Lord.'*  
Fr. Gus

## Wellspring

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WHEN YOU  
ENCOUNTER  
DIFFICULTIES AND  
CONTRADICTIONS,  
DO NOT TRY TO  
BREAK THEM,  
BUT BEND THEM  
WITH GENTLENESS  
AND TIME

*St. Francis de Sales*



# EDITORIAL

Wellspring Community has been reflecting on forbearance as our virtue of the year. A little boy was carrying another boy on his shoulders. A passerby asked him, "Isn't he heavy?" The boy replied, "He isn't heavy. He is my brother." That is what forbearance is. It is an attitude of mind and heart that enables us to bear our own burdens and those of others because we accept them as our brothers and sisters.

Forbearance is strength, but disciplined strength for our own good, for the benefit of others, for the good of the family, community, and society. The wise man says, "By patience a ruler can be persuaded and a gentle tongue can break a bone." (Proverbs 25:15) Forbearance calls forth self-discipline, self-restraint, self-control, humility and other-centeredness. St. Francis de Sales advises us, "When you encounter contradictions and difficulties, do not try to break them, but bend them with gentleness and time." Forbearance is a determined, focused, resolute and tenacious approach to achieving goals, fulfilling purpose, and solving problems and patiently waiting for results.

St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) about a "thorn in the flesh" that caused him great suffering. Scholars have given various interpretations to the "thorn" in the flesh. Whatever the suffering was, from his letter, we know that he prayed, repeatedly, to be freed from the suffering. The relief that he prayed for did not come, only a promise came, "My grace is sufficient for you..." The promise was an assurance of grace to live and work with the thorn and not to be freed from it...a promise of strength to face the obstacles and patiently endure the difficulties for the sake of the Gospel.

The "thorn" had to be acknowledged and embraced as a suffering to patiently endure, as an opportunity to trust in God's Grace and to rely on God as the source of power and strength in troublesome times. Forbearance is a gift of God that we must accept and nurture. It doesn't just happen. We must choose to nurture it. We must be deliberate, intentional and steadfast in cultivating this virtue. Forbearance enables us to wait patiently, keep trying as we wait, take a different approach, a new approach, and try something that we have not tried before.

I hope that the articles presented in this issue of Spiritual Moments will help you deepen your understanding and appreciation of the virtue of forbearance and that you will nurture it and let it become your virtue.

Fr. Gus Tharappel

## RETREATS & PROGRAMS AT WELLSPRING

We have many activities and opportunities for spiritual growth at Wellspring. For more information about our programs and private retreats, please visit our websites, call or email us. Please consider joining us for one of the remaining retreats this year. All are welcome.


### RETREATS ON THE VIRTUE OF FORBEARANCE

September 14, October 12 and November 9

### ADVENT RETREAT

December 7

# FORBEARANCE, FORGIVENESS AND MERCY



Learn  
patience  
where you are,  
with people  
& situations  
that challenge  
your  
patience

Our world needs our “forbearance, forgiveness and mercy.” All sorts of hurt and pain, fear and anxiety, anger and confusion, distrust and suspicion linger around us. We are being threatened by negative and heated conversations, massive and destructive protests, war and violence, political unrest, economic uncertainties, and election fever. I know some people who would love to move to another country and maybe another world if they could, but we just can’t. Where would we go and where is that world where these unpleasant realities don’t exist? How do we exist in a civil society that has lost its civility? How do you engage in conversations on important matters without the

fear of doing more harm than good to relationships we value. No matter how hard we try, we could end up doing or saying something to which someone else takes offense.

That sounds bad. But these are the feelings that many have shared with me in recent times. A sense of helplessness seems to linger, but we are not without help, guidance and direction. Our Church’s spiritual traditions offer us guidance and direction for these troublesome times. Our Church teaches us that there are seven spiritual works of mercy: admonish the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead. They call us to imitate Jesus by practicing justice, kindness, compassion and mercy toward our neighbor. All seven spiritual works are important for giving witness to Jesus and his way. However, at this time, as we are facing some of the struggles mentioned above, we need more “forbearance” by the practice of the last four spiritual works of mercy: comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead.

This goes against the current practices. Many would prefer to be on Twitter, telling everyone else what they’re doing wrong. After all, so much out there needs correcting. If we don’t do it, who will? The answer is lots of people. There are many men and women, online or in the real world, ready and willing to tell others what they should be thinking and how they should be acting. There is no shortage of advisors and counselors, but only a few people are willing to just love others in their pain, give others the benefit of the doubt, let go of past wounds, and do the hard work of forgiving, forbearing and interceding for our broken world. What we urgently need now is forbearance, the virtue that enables us to heal our own brokenness and that of others.

To forbear - bear wrongs patiently - requires us to assume the best about those who hurt us. It asks us to presume that the person who said or did the wrong, offensive or obnoxious thing was perhaps trying to help us, was acting out of ignorance or is suffering themselves and acted out of their own pain. In effect, it calls us to remember that we cannot see hearts or know minds and that we risk doing a grave injustice to someone when we leap to judgment. Because of that, when we bear wrongs patiently, we show ourselves mercy too.

Along with giving others the benefit of the doubt, bearing wrongs patiently requires us to not return kind for kind: to not return insult for insult, offense for offense, or raised voices for raised voices. It is to obey the teaching of Jesus, “But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...” (Matthew 5:39) Do you realize that no one can strike you on your right cheek unless he or she strikes you from behind or with the back of the palm of his or her hand or with his or her left hand... all three add insult to injury. Jesus advises us not to retaliate even when we are treated with such meanness.

Forbearing - bearing wrongs patiently - calls us to not pity ourselves. When we are insulted, when we are attacked, when we are unjustly maligned, we should never see ourselves as an innocent victim because we’re not. We have all done things wrong — made bad choices, said bad things, failed to do good things —

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and suffering through an injustice with patience and love is our chance to repent for the hurt we have caused others. Regardless of intent, hurts simply hurt. Wounds, however they're inflicted, are real. They exist. We can and must respond to them by forbearance through the spiritual work of forgiveness. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. God always forgives, readily, freely and absolutely. He doesn't hold a grudge. He doesn't nurse hurt feelings. He doesn't complain about what we have done to him on social media. Instead, He pours out his mercy on us. We must do the same; that is forbearance, forgiveness and mercy.

From the cross, Jesus anticipated our requests for forgiveness. He didn't wait for us to tell him that we were sorry before he died for us. He died for us — while we were still far from him. Jesus asks us to do the same, to forgive those who don't deserve or even ask for our forgiveness. That kind of forgiveness can take time. The deeper the wounds the harder it can be to forgive.

Nothing is too big to forgive, and nothing is so small that you can afford to ignore it. Give yourself and others time to forgive. Give yourself and others time to heal.

Forgiveness is really a gift to self – and hopefully to the other. Forgiveness gives us the opportunity to stop judging, to stop condemning. Forgiveness is really for our benefit, not necessarily for the benefit of others. Others may or may not even know that they have offended us. They go on with their lives and we carry the burden of the hurt. Forgiveness unburdens us from the burden that we carry and brings us peace.

Forgiveness is one of the most compassionate and kind things that we can do for others and for ourselves too in the process. However, we tend to think of forgiveness as an act of mercy, compassion and kindness that we choose to give to some people who seem to deserve it yet withhold this gift from others who seem undeserving and unrepentant. Forgiveness actually is not about what other people do or don't do. Forgiveness is about the person who is doing the forgiving. It is a decision that we make for ourselves with the hope that it will bless and heal us and hopefully bless others. Forgiveness offers us the opportunity to free the world from our own condemnation of it.

We are given many opportunities to practice forgiveness of others, until someday; we feel free enough to forgive ourselves. We have the opportunity, many times each day, to forgive others and ourselves too. Many times we refuse, preferring to hold on to our grievances. Holding onto grievances is often a comfortable activity in which to engage. Grievances support the negative perspective by witnessing to our being victimized by people around us and by the world in general. By being a victim, we somehow seem to be free from the demands of a free person. A free person must act freely, openly, compassionately, lovingly. A victimized person claims the right to be angry.

In these troublesome times, our world needs our forbearance. It needs our forgiveness and mercy. And most of all, it needs our prayers. Prayer makes the other spiritual works of mercy not only fruitful, but possible. So, if forbearance is a struggle for you, start with prayer, and ask God for the gift of forbearance and forgiveness will follow.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs



*Ever Loving Father, bless me, form me,  
shape me and transform me with forbearance.*

# FORBEARANCE AND THE DAILY TRIFLES

We live in a world where people have become too sensitive and touchy and greatly lacking in forbearance, tolerance and patience. I heard someone say that in America today most of us "wear our bones too tight." Every little thing has to be judged, evaluated and commented on. Everything has to be critically evaluated, whether the thing is good or bad. Most people seem to have an answer, a suggestion and a solution to the problems that they don't seem to even understand. Whatever you say or do or don't say or don't do, someone seems to take offense just because they are different – a different color, ethnic group, language, nationality, religion or political orientation. We seem to be uptight about all sorts of things.

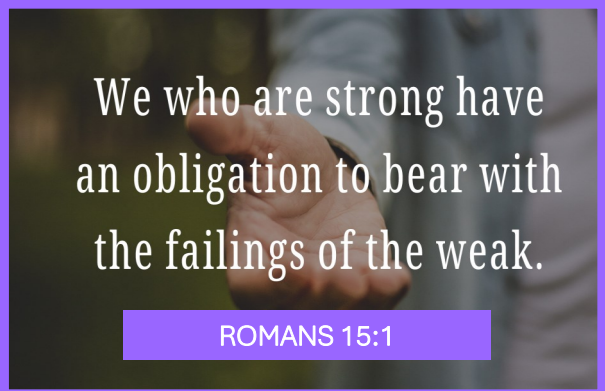
People seem to get offended over the smallest matters. The daily trifles, the little things that we just used to shrug off and say, "Oh! That's just crazy." or "You have got to be kidding." or "Don't sweat it." or "Really?" and so on have now become major issues while we seem to ignore or overlook major issues such as ethics and morality and religion. Since we have become so touchy, we seem to be constantly fighting and arguing over nothing, over little itty-bitty things that don't really matter in the grand scheme of things. Members of the family or Church or just neighbors used to settle something in the backyard over a cup of coffee or a can of beer or just over the back fence. Now conflicts and disagreements have to be taken to the courts or aired out in public.

This reminds me of a story about a community of monks arguing about the number of teeth their horse had. It seems that they debated this issue for fourteen days with loud and angry voices, with monks forming groups, taking sides and calling names. Finally on the evening of the fourteenth day, one of the junior monks who was not allowed to participate in these discussions spoke up. He just couldn't control himself anymore. He was loud and clear and spoke with authority. He shouted, "I suggest that you look into the mouth of our horse if you want to find out how many teeth he has." There was pin-drop-silence. No one responded. Silence engulfed the room. Problem solved and peace came among the monks.

Does it really matter in the long run that you won an argument with the person sitting next to you or your group won the debate? Paul advises us not to argue about words. It's not worth it because it produces disunity and disharmony. He says, "Remind people of these things and charge them before God to stop arguing about words. This serves no useful purpose since it harms those who listen." (2 Timothy 2:14)

Little things become big in the absence of forbearance. We offend people and break up the spirit of family and community by arguing over trifles because we can not tolerate differences. We shun people or shut certain people out of our lives because we disagree with them over something that just may pass if we wait patiently. We must consider the possibility of waiting patiently for things to pass or putting up with the imperfections of others or enduring the shortcomings of others instead of pushing them away or running away from them. Forbearance is putting up with one another.

Our God's character is forbearance, patiently putting up with over 700 years of covenant breaking by our ancestors, patiently refraining from giving them what they deserved. God put up with the failures of Abraham, Samson, David, Job, and many others, allowing them space to repent and build their character. Jacob was a broken man at Peniel during his journey to Canaan; David was a broken man after his sin with Bathsheba; Jeremiah was a broken man cursing the day of his birth; Paul was a broken man on the road to Damascus; Peter was a broken man after the arrest of Jesus. All of them discovered how forbearing God was and how they should form and shape and transform their character and image God's character.



We who are strong have  
an obligation to bear with  
the failings of the weak.

ROMANS 15:1

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Brokenness makes us aware of human frailty and enables us to remember that we can do nothing on our own strength, but we can do all things by the strength that God gives. Nothing is impossible with God. "I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me." (Philippians 4:13) We must learn to wait patiently for God in our brokenness, and He will restore us with "renewed strength like the eagles." (Isaiah 40:31)

You will remember the story of Moses going up the mountain and coming down with two tablets with the Ten Commandments etched on them. (Exodus 32) When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw his people dancing to the golden calf in sacrifice and worship. He became disappointed and angry and broke the tablets of commandments into bits and pieces. It was the special gift of God for him and his people that he threw away and broke into bits and pieces. He was a broken man that was angry, disappointed and ready to quit. But he climbed up the mountain again with two new tablets and got the commandments etched in again. In his brokenness, Moses found his God of compassion and mercy, and he discovered how forbearing God is and how much more forbearing he must become.

We need to strive to develop the Godly trait of forbearance that enables us to have compassion and mercy for others while we wait patiently for them to change. Forbearance, when applied to our brothers and sisters, leads to unity, establishes harmony and builds community while lack of forbearance leads to disunity and breakdown in families, communities and countries. If we try to be a little more forbearing with ourselves and with others, we may discover how forbearing God is with us. Try to consider making forbearance an important part of your character...letting forbearance be your virtue...let this virtue define who you are, especially in conflicting situations. Many men and women who have been chosen by God experienced brokenness of various kinds. Broken fragments are the birthplace of hope and hope enables us to wait patiently. Do not be afraid or ashamed of brokenness. It just may be the missing ingredient to a life that emerges with a new kind of strength and experience not known before, the kind of strength only forbearing – patient waiting – can bring.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

## QUIET PLEASE

In the daily morning meditations on the Scripture reading of the day's mass that Fr. Gus publishes on Wellspring's website, he shares one of his thoughts or a quote on forbearance. One of his recent thoughts about forbearance was:

***Most of us aren't naturally equipped with the virtue of forbearance so we must be intentional about nurturing this virtue.***

Forbearance is a virtue that is hard to practice and master. I have joked with my husband and children that I have so much "good advice" that it's hard not to share it. If someone I am close to is doing something that I feel could benefit from my input, it has been hard for me to sit quietly and not say anything.

As I have learned more about forbearance, I have discovered the need to be quiet. There have been times this year when I have been in conflict with others and I have wrestled with saying something. I have wanted to say something, to defend myself, to help someone see things my way when I have "heard" the voice of Fr. Gus reminding me of these two simple words, "Say nothing." During those times, I realized that what I wanted to say was probably not going to change the conversation. Learning to sit in silence and not defend myself or share my thoughts was difficult at first, but as I have practiced, it has gotten easier. I believe it has nurtured my relationships and aided in my spiritual growth as well.

In Fr. Gus' article in this journal titled, ***Forbearance, Forgiveness and Mercy***, I was inspired by these thoughts:

***...so much out there needs correcting. If we don't do it, who will? The answer is lots of people...***

***There is no shortage of advisors and counselors, but only few people are willing to let go of past wounds, and do the hard work of forgiving, forbearing and interceding for our broken world.***



These thoughts make me contemplate who I want to be for the world and especially for those I love and care about. Will I be one of the many advisors or counselors correcting all that is wrong in the world or will I choose to be one of the few who will just love people in their pain and give them the benefit of the doubt?

I look back on the times where I felt like I needed to "set the record straight" and I can see that there were times when that caused hurt feelings or harm to others. I am happy that I have made some progress in practicing the virtue of forbearance and remaining silent.

It amazes me that our studies of the different virtues through the years are so life changing. I haven't thought very much about forbearance before this year, but as I learn more about and am mindful of the virtue, I find more opportunities to practice it.

I have found that much of my spiritual transformation comes from practicing the virtues and becoming more virtuous. I believe when we know better, we do better. I hope my understanding of forbearance continues to grow and becomes more evident in my life.

Bari Walker

## STRIVING FOR FORBEARANCE

I often listen to a Christian radio station as I drive around town. One day, I heard a mother share her story of attending to the needs of her father. Her father lived alone and was lonely and in need of help with keeping up his house. She and her husband invited him to come and live with them. They had three young children. For a few months her father, Grandpa Jerry, was able to go along with all the activities of the busy house.

However, his daughter noticed that he struggled with taking his meals. She saw that often the floor around his chair in the dining room had pieces of food and was a sticky mess. She purchased a large vinyl cloth to place under his chair hoping it would catch the spills. While doing Grandpa Jerry's laundry she noticed food stains on the front of most of his shirts, so she found a big over-sized plastic bib that would cover the front of his shirt. Then Grandpa Jerry started dropping his water glass. The glass would shatter, and water would cover the floor. The daughter replaced his plate, water glass and silverware with plastic utensils. All these changes helped with the many messes.

When Grandpa Jerry fell ill and passed away, the daughter gathered up all of Grandpa Jerry's dining room paraphernalia - the drop cloth, the oversized bib, and the plastic utensils - and put them in a large trash bag and put them out by the curb. The trash would be hauled away the next day.

Later that day when she opened the hall closet, there sat the trash bag. Her nine-year-old son was nearby, and he told his mom, "I saw Grandpa Jerry's things outside, and I brought them back inside. I will need those things for you when you get old and come to live with me."

Tears filled her eyes. She had been irritated by Grandpa Jerry and his many messes. She struggled to be patient and forbearing. Her son's words reminded her of her own frailty. Each of us needs patience and forbearance from others. In the words of St. Paul, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

Patricia Cussen

*When we grow weary of serving others,  
Help us Lord to remember your love and mercy.  
When we are tired and short of patience,  
Help us Lord to remember your love and mercy.  
When we struggle to love others,  
Help us Lord to remember your love and mercy.*

OUR FAVORITE  
*Forbearance*  
QUOTES

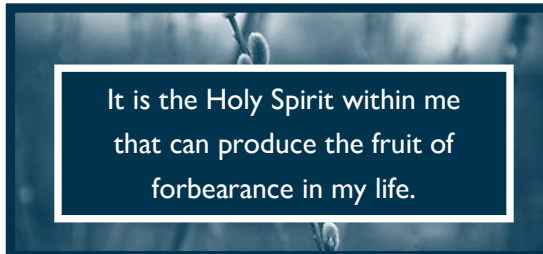


**FORBEARANCE IS NOT  
GIVING IMMEDIATELY  
WHAT IS DESERVED BUT  
GIVING PEOPLE SPACE  
AND TIME TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR  
SHORTFALLS**



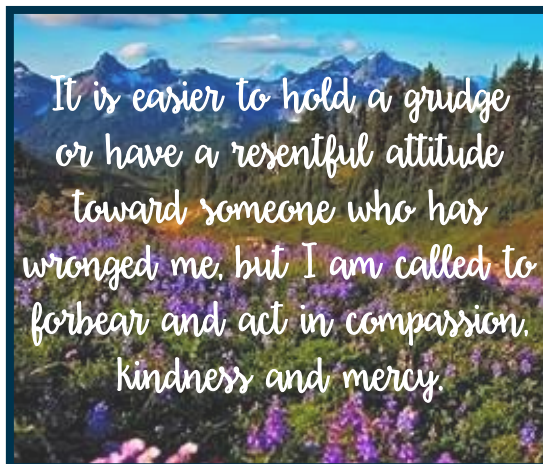
FORBEARANCE IS  
REMINDING OURSELVES  
THAT WE LOVE JESUS  
AND HIS WAY MORE  
THAN BEING TROUBLED  
BY A PAINFUL SITUATION,  
FAILURE, IMPERFECTION  
OR SHORTFALL OF OTHERS  
OR OUR OWN

**FORBEARANCE  
IS PATIENT ENDURANCE  
OF A PERSON EVEN  
WHEN TOLERANCE OF  
WHAT IS DONE SEEMS  
IMPOSSIBLE**

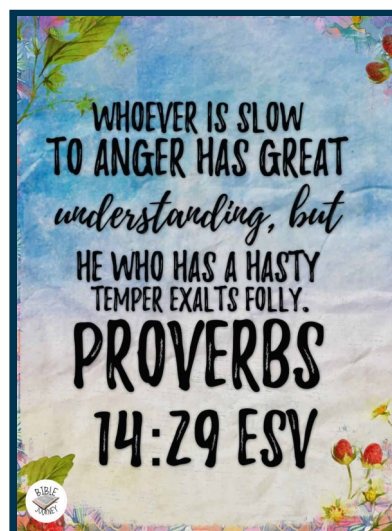


It is the Holy Spirit within me  
that can produce the fruit of  
forbearance in my life.

**BEING A FAMILY MEMBER IS  
HARD NO MATTER  
WHERE YOU ARE.  
IT'S HARD TO BE A KID.  
IT'S HARD TO BE A PARENT.  
IT'S HARD TO BE A SIBLING.  
IT TAKES PATIENCE,  
KINDNESS & FORBEARANCE**



*It is easier to hold a grudge  
or have a resentful attitude  
toward someone who has  
wronged me, but I am called to  
forbear and act in compassion.  
kindness and mercy.*



LORD,  
TEACH ME  
FORBEARANCE WHEN  
THINGS GO WRONG AS  
THEY SOMETIMES WILL  
SO THAT I MAY REMAIN  
UNRUFFLED WHEN  
OTHERS GROW UPTIGHT

**FORBEARANCE IS CHOOSING TO BEAR WITH THE INCONVENIENCES  
OR TROUBLES OF THE DAY AND PATIENTLY WAITING IN HOPE**

"Spiritual Moments" is published each year by Wellspring, Fransalian Center for Spirituality. Its main purpose is to share "spiritual moments" and articles on various aspects of spirituality along with information on programs and events at Wellspring. It is circulated, primarily, among the many volunteers, participants, friends and wells-wishers of Wellspring and the Fransalian Missionaries.

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