

Homily 24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026

‘Harbouring anger and refusing to forgive can be a major health hazard’

Norman Peale in his classic ‘The Power of Positive Thinking’, states that much of our sleepless nights are the consequence of having two unhealthy bedfellows, ‘fear and guilt’, and until we rid them from our psyche, we will remain in an unhealthy mental state. Dennis and Matthew Linn, two Jesuit priests, in their book, ‘Healing Life’s Hurts’* also warn us of the dangers of unprocessed anger, unresolved guilt and unwillingness to forgive. The writers alert us to the potential damage these states of mind can inflict, not only to our mental wellbeing but also on our physical health.

Holy Scripture offers us an antidote to such negative and damaging mental states. In today’s First Reading the Wisdom Writer in The Book of Sirach counsels us, ‘Anger and wrath, these are abominations. Forgive your neighbour the wrong he has done... and then your sins will be pardoned. Remember the commandments and do not be angry with your neighbour.’ The antidote to living with damaging guilt and fear is to ask God’s forgiveness, to truly believe that our God is a loving and compassionate Father who will always forgive us and consequently to act with mercy to those who offend us. The Responsorial Psalm today reassures us that God, by his very nature, is indeed full of compassion and love, ‘It is the Lord who forgives all your sins, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with mercy and compassion. The LORD is compassionate and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.’

This antidote for insomnia and a prescription for physical and mental wellbeing are also repeated in today’s Gospel. St Matthew writes, “Peter came up and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.” This Christian obligation to forgive always is justified because God loved us so much that he sent, “Christ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, **he further humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” (Phil 2:6-8) Be careful therefore, not to fall into the same trap as the servant in The Gospel who although forgiven much by his master did not show the same mercy, compassion and forgiveness to a fellow servant who owed him much less. This eventually, led him to disaster.

In conclusion, a prescription for insomnia and to regain mental and physical wellbeing: always forgive those who hurt or offend you because failing to do so can eat into you and can do both mental and physical harm; don’t dwell on the crippling guilt of past sins but know that God is indeed rich in mercy and full of compassion; know that such forgiveness of both self and others will free you from anger which can, at times, be a contributing source of both mental and physical illness.

How stunningly liberating is that.

***‘Healing Life’s Hurts: Healing Memories Through the Five Stages Forgiveness’
by Matthew Linn and Dennis Linn**

A. The Central Idea

The book argues that **unresolved emotional wounds from the past can continue to shape our present lives**—our relationships, reactions, self-image, and even our physical and emotional wellbeing. Healing isn’t simply forgetting what happened or deciding intellectually to forgive someone. Instead, we need to **revisit the hurt, experience the emotions connected with it, and gradually allow forgiveness and God’s love to transform the memory**.

The authors adapt the familiar **five stages associated with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross** to the process of healing memories: 1. **Denial** — recognising that something genuinely hurt us rather than minimising or suppressing it. 2. **Anger** — allowing ourselves to acknowledge anger, injustice and other strong emotions rather than pretending we’re fine. 3. **Bargaining** — wrestling with “if only...” thoughts and the ways we try to make sense of or undo what happened. 4. **Depression** — grieving what was lost and allowing ourselves to experience the sadness beneath the anger. 5. **Acceptance** — accepting that the past cannot be changed and beginning to release its hold on us and seeing the good that resulted from the hurt.

B. What Makes Their Approach Distinctive

The Linns put **forgiveness at the centre**, but they don’t present forgiveness as simply saying “I forgive you” and moving on. Their basic movement is more like: **Remember → feel → grieve → forgive → receive love → become free to live differently**.

A painful memory can remain emotionally “alive.” Something in the present can trigger the old wound, causing us to react with an intensity that belongs partly to the past. Healing involves separating **what happened then** from **what is happening now**, while allowing the emotional pain to be processed. They also strongly emphasise **God’s unconditional love**.

C. An Important Distinction: forgiveness versus excusing

One of the most useful implications of the book is that **forgiving someone doesn’t mean saying that what they did was acceptable**.

You can acknowledge: “What happened to me was wrong.” and still eventually reach:

“I don’t want what happened to me to control my life anymore.”

So, forgiveness is ultimately about **releasing the power of the injury over you**, rather than denying the injury.

D. In Summary

Healing Life’s Hurts is essentially a Christian guide to understanding how old emotional wounds remain active, moving honestly through the emotions they produce, and allowing forgiveness, grieving and God’s love to transform rather than erase those memories.

NB This methodology is based on Christian spirituality and cannot claim to be a form of psychotherapy