

What 's in your closet?

What you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Matthew 18:18

Are there any closet stuffers among us?

You know we like to save things and don't want to throw anything away so we stuff it somewhere.

With the promise of course of one day retrieving it and using it for whatever purpose.

Some may have a junk drawer at home that serves the same purpose or an attic or some other place that we keep things.

These special spots are often stuffed with all sorts of things. Old shoes, old Time magazine collections, electronic gadgets or extra wires, that odd dish that doesn't go with anything. But often interspersed amidst all of this are treasures, memories, precious items that are heirlooms of our lives. Each containing stories to be told for hours on end.

Spiritually we too keep things stuffed away in our hearts. Memories of encounters with God, traditions, religious practices, devotions etc.. But in that same spiritual closet we often hide our hurts, resentments, our unresolved guilt that we keep tucked away with the hopes perhaps that they will dissolve on their own.

Mathew's gospel lesson today suggests a really important formula for how to offer forgiveness to someone who has hurt us or done us harm.

1. Go to the person and talk with them about the hurt.
2. Go find someone to accompany you and go to the person and talk about the hurt.
3. Go to the church and bring the whole church and go talk with the person. And finally if that doesn't work you can treat them as if they do not belong.

I almost wonder whether or not we follow this in reverse.

The tradition of our church offers us a wonderful sacramental rite called the rite of reconciliation. Please take out your prayer book and turn to the following page.446

1. The ministry of reconciliation has been committed by Christ to his church...how?

- a. through the care that each Christian has for others.
- b. the common prayer of Christians at worship
- c. and through the priesthood of the Church and its minister declaring absolution.

2. Reconciliation is offered to all who desire it, anytime and anywhere.

The secrecy of a confession is morally absolute for the confessor and under no circumstances is to be broken.

Paul reminds us that as Christians it is part of our life together to be forgiving to put an end to bickering and jealousy and to put on the armor of light. To not act out of fear and mistrust but to act out of love for one another.

Forgiveness is a vehicle to do just that. It is a spiritual closet cleaning, not throwing out everything but definitely letting go of those things that really do not serve us.