

Anger can give us strength to heal

Q. I have a terrible anger about what someone has done to me and my children. I can't forgive her and am worried about my eternal salvation. Years ago my husband left us for a woman who had at least two marriages before that. He and I never legally divorced but we did have a legal separation.

They lived together for about 14 years, during which time she did everything possible to keep me and the children from having any contact with him. He didn't seem interested either, until his final illness. She kept us away, wouldn't give him messages and told him we didn't want anything to do with him.

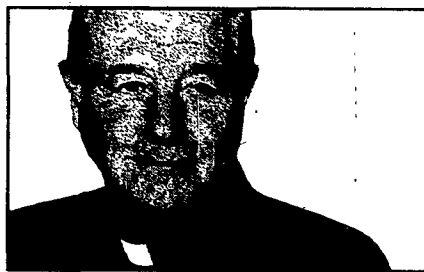
Though the separation agreement gave us a good share of his assets at his death, we discovered after he died recently that she had arranged a change in his will, giving her everything, his pension, insurance and property.

The children (now grown) and I have very little money and really needed what he could have given us after all these years. But my biggest worry is that, while I think I have managed to forgive him, no matter how hard I try I cannot forgive and forget what she has done. Isn't it a serious sin to be so angry? What can I do to get back to God? (Ohio)

A. I don't believe you are as far from God, or he from you, as you think. Judging only from what you tell me, you and your children have suffered a great injustice. When that happens certain things naturally happen inside us.

First of all, there is a big difference between forgiving and forgetting. You simply cannot ever forget what has been done to you. The memory will come back often whether you want it to or not.

Similarly, you cannot avoid being angry. It is natural and good to become angry when someone does something that badly hurts us or people we love. Anger is nature's (God's) way of energizing and moving us to do what we can to alleviate



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Bridging Gaps

and correct whatever unjustly causes us loss or pain.

So anger is neither good nor bad. It's what we do with our anger that's important. We can react to it by lashing out in revenge, trying to hurt the others as much as, or more than, they have hurt us. Or we can let anger strengthen us to heal, or at least minimize, the pain in ourselves and others, to do our best to replace evil and violence with goodness and love.

That's not easy of course. It takes a good deal of hope and faith; but it is possible, and that's what God's grace is for. Any other approach just piles on more harm for everyone.


So becoming angry or not, or forgetting what happened, are not things over which you have control. Thus they are not sinful.

If you can bring yourself to pray in some way for this woman and decide that you will at least speak to her decently and charitably if the situation arises, you can be confident that you are not refusing to forgive her in the way God asks us. It seems to me that's what you are already trying to do.

For the rest, you need to carefully engage a good attorney who will determine and protect your rights. I hope you have already done that.

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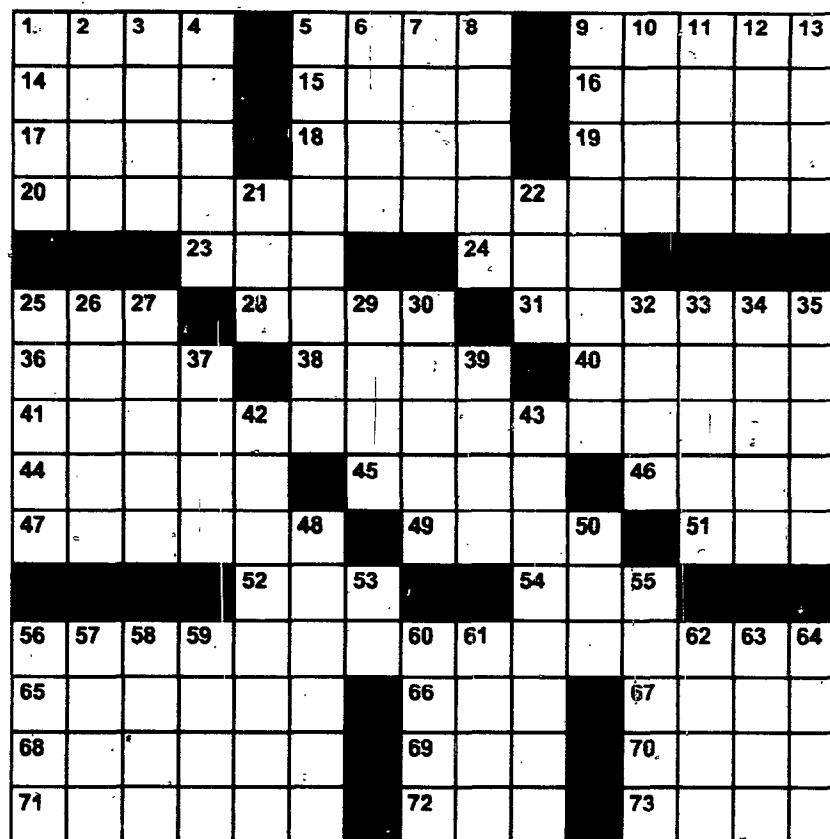
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Catholic Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Alphabet string
5 Legs
9 Alas' partner
14 What God formed Adam from
15 Patron saint of sailors
16 Parisian morning
17 Nice roast
18 Genesis precipitation
19 United
20 US Bishops'

- 23 Organization founded by Juliette Low (abbr.)
24 Samson used the jawbone of one of these to kill the Philistines
25 ET
28 Inst. of higher learning
31 Style of house
36 "Your new moons and festivals I detest; they weigh me down, I _____ of the load." (Is 1:14)
38 Gossip
40 The patriarchs were probably happy to find these in the desert
41 Sts. Isaac Jogues, Anthony, Daniel, Charles Garnier, et al. Jesuit North _____
44 To put in proper order again
45 "Jesus is the _____ of God
46 Wither
47 _____ reason to!
49 Light brown
51 Internet chat room letters of appreciation
52 A work of art, to

DOWN

- 1 God's Little _____
2 Group of nations
3 Roman statesman
4 "_____ you destroyed our death."
5 St. Boniface preached to these Barbarian tribes
6 Jai _____
7 Penultimate year of the next century, in Latin
8 Ms. Henie
9 Say _____ (offer liturgy with special intention)
10 "and the _____ will be first." (Mt 19:30)
11 "To you" to Jacques
12 Pres., as head of the army
13 Cap or jerk starter
21 St. Angela Merici's rel. order
22 Amer.

- Cicero
54 Toward the stern
56, Latin hymn, O

- 65 _____ de fêr (version of baccarat)
66 Teachers' org.
67 Rain protection and commandment carrier
68 Snug _____
69 Animal of sacrifice in the Bible
70 What Paul's preaching in Thessalonica set off
71 Ill-humored
72 Possessive pronoun
73 Sound (comb)

- 25 Game maker
26 These kept the British soldiers from getting scurvy
27 Brother in a French order
29 Type of type (abbr.)
30 _____ cavae
32 The piper's following
33 Up to the present time
34 Like Robin Hood's men
35 Curves
37 Canal or Lake
39 MDL + MDL
42 Founder of the Jesuits
43 Namesakes of the first patriarch
48 One of the few words in English that doesn't rhyme with another word
50 Probably how 25A got here
53 Rel. title
55 Rulers
56 Confidence game
57, Charlie Chan's exclamation
58 Shakespearean king
59 Boss on a shield
60 Sign over the cross
61 Jesus "took his _____ at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:3)
62 Kingston or Ramsey Lewis
63 Holy picture
64 Concerning

Answers on page 10 (#29)