

Le Puy En Velay: Landscape of Reconciliation

The watercolor painting *Le Puy En Velay: Landscape of Reconciliation* depicts a view of the city where the Sisters of St. Joseph were founded in 1650. Built on a hill in the volcanic region of the Haute-Loire in France, the city of Le Puy grew within the crater of an extinct volcano and was an important urban center by 1650 as well as a pilgrimage center since the Middle Ages.

The “puys” or chimneys of volcanoes jut vertically toward the heavens in dramatic contrast to the flat horizontal landscape on the crater floor. Like the symbol of the Christian cross the juxtaposition of horizontal and vertical movements signifies the reconciliation of opposites. Rich in history, this region lies within a vein of reconciliation whose people offered sanctuary and safety to Jews during the Nazi genocide. The neighboring territory, source of the Loire River and its deep caverns, hosts villages, rich farmland, animals and woods.

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“Give us each day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses
As we forgive others...”

Steps in the Forgiveness Process

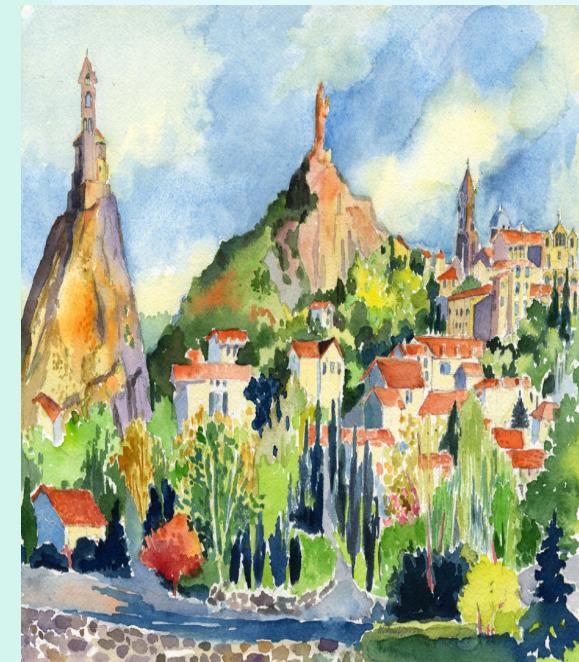
1. Name and claim the hurt you experienced.
2. Pray for openness, ask for God’s grace, begin the journey to forgiveness.
3. Give back the humanity of your offender.
4. Give up “your right” to get even.
5. Revise your feelings toward your offender, pray for his/her wellbeing.
6. Receive and share God’s healing and mercy.



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Garden of Forgiveness



**Le Puy En Velay:
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GARDEN OF FORGIVENESS: Dedication on Founder's Day, October 9, 2008

History of the Rose Garden



The rose bushes in the Rose Garden were donated to Chestnut Hill College in the spring of 1993 as a memorial to Thomas Larkin, father of Sister Mary Jo Larkin SSJ, who died in February of that year. Over the years this garden was tended with love and care by Florence Edward Sullivan, SSJ.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Garden of Forgiveness at Chestnut Hill College is to join with the global community for reconciliation and unity. It is a place where those of us in this college community can go to let go of hurts, grievances, and resentments. This is a place where healing can happen for individuals and/or groups. This garden is a place of reflection and inspiration.

The world's first Garden of Forgiveness is in Central Beirut, Lebanon, where thousands were killed in the violence of their civil war. Family members of 9/11 victims journeyed to Lebanon's Garden of Forgiveness to plant an olive tree for peace. Not one person who stood in that space, on that soil, was untouched by the healing grace of forgiveness , as difficult as the journey there may have been. Now, people are working to realize the vision of a Garden of Forgiveness in New York City.

Why Forgive?

Forgiveness is part of a larger process of reconciliation with God, others, the world and ourselves. Forgiveness models the kind of love God has for all of us and for our world. It is another word for love in a world where we love imperfectly. As human beings we hurt and are hurt by one another. We cannot change the past, but we do not have to cling to it and carry our feelings about it into the future. Forgiveness opens us to life. The person who is willing to forgive demonstrates less anxiety and stress, as well as a renewed energy inspired by hope and faith. Forgiveness is a gift that first comes to us through an experience of God's healing, mercy and love. The journey to forgiveness is thus a response to that inner impulse. Once begun, its paths are unique, personal and not to be rushed. The journey begins with a sincere desire to let go of past hurts, and to heal the pain within. The desire itself is the stirring of God's grace, the willingness to begin the forgiveness work is our response. Through forgiveness the emotional, physical, and spiritual burdens of the past are lifted, and new possibilities for a future full of hope can be embraced.. We are free to be ourselves again. Thus, we embrace our mission; to heal the past and create the future- one Garden of Forgiveness at a time.

Why a Garden for Forgiveness?

If you have ever taken care of a garden or even one house plant, you will notice that one minute the plants could be healthy and green and the next time you see them, they look near death. However, after a healthy dose of water and the plucking off of brown leaves and old blooms, suddenly they spring back into life. In this way, plants themselves are symbols of forgiveness. Our relationships are often healthy and we nurture them with love, caring, compassion, communication and attention. However, there are times when we are neglectful and even hurtful and we stop "watering" those we care about. We are wounded or we wound and we hold onto those hurts, those brown leaves, and the relationship begins to die. We can resurrect that relationship by saying "I'm sorry", "I forgive", "I love you". These words can be the water of life to the relationship. The brown leaves and the old blooms are removed but replaced by new ones. In this garden we planted crocuses as a symbol of forgiveness. This first flower of spring often sticks its head out of the snowy ground reminding us of new life and new beginnings.

