

Forgive Everybody Everything
Harvesting, March 7, 2023

“The book is a collection of stories from *Tattoos of the Heart*. *Lectio* and *visio divina* have meant a lot; a kaleidoscope of beauty. The book is born out of struggle. We see the tremendous pain of these men and women, stories from ashes to beauty. I was particularly moved by the story of Fr. Greg with the mortician, and the story from the bus, when the guy gives the drunk the info on Homeboy. There’s a thread of worthiness in the stories. And the ongoing process of forgiveness. If folks at Homeboy can rise above and enter the path of forgiveness, we can too. I’m a fan of Homeboy (showed us her t-shirt). During SNOWVID, when the Texas power grid failed, a person from Homeboy called to check on me (I support them). I so appreciated that.”

“There are so many things I am taking from this class. *Lectio* and *visio divina* have been so helpful. Everything comes back to joy and God’s delight in us. This allows us to move toward forgiveness. Reconnecting with that joy and experiencing it has helped me make my life a prayer, and hopefully a blessing. It pulls me back from the cliff of despair, bitterness, resentment. It allows me to practice joy, “so that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11) This has been a blessing for me; I learned so much from all of you, from Mary and Rosalyn.”

“I kept thinking this book would be easy. WRONG!! I remembered that saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” I looked that up, and realized that it meant not to judge someone by appearance. On p. 19 there’s a painting of a young man with a small child. The man looks a lot like my brother, who died of pancreatic cancer 3 years ago. He had addiction issues. He was a good person. I kept seeing “rejoice” in the text that’s opposite this painting. And I remembered, “Your joy will be complete.” (Jn. 15:11) This has reassured me. Fabian’s presence with us so moved me. I was glad I had tissues at my desk. This class has touched me more than I could have ever thought. I’ve added two new words to my vocabulary: kinship and tenderoni. Thanks to Joel, Victoria, Mary and Rosalyn, as always.”

“I had to go through the book carefully and review what we have learned. I experienced awe and wonder throughout—we are so connected with the people in the book. Stories probably brought out more healing than workshops on forgiveness. I was familiar with the culture and with the artwork. It reminded me of my students when I taught bilingual education. And it also reminded me of my work in the county jail. Boyle’s stories connected to mine—resilience, change in perspective. I am recognizing the crippling images of God that need to change in me. I have been led to trust the Spirit that works in the lives of people who have lived in violence. It has led me to perceive ways that I need to let go of resentment. The stories helped me with attentiveness to relationships in the here and now that need tenderness. Thanks to Mary and Rosalyn who amplified the poetic and scriptural dimensions of Fr. Boyle’s work. Mary and Rosalyn brought things for us to contemplate—prayers, music, quotes, stories. These brought me into new awareness of tenderness. I remember the picture of Adolph’s Meat Tenderizer and Mary Gauthier’s song “We Need a Little Mercy Now.” The small group experience allowed us to bring each other our own experiences, which led to great vulnerability. I’m particularly

grateful that Joel and Victoria were so kind with my discomfort with Zoom and being online. I'm deeply grateful for our time together."

"I'm so grateful to the group for your attention and your presence has created a safe place and has created a very real part of my life for two months. What a joy! Every time that you enter a class of a book like this, with open teachers and open participants, it's dangerous! This is a dangerous title. Fr. Greg consistently offers the love of God. Unavoidably, all sorts of things start coming to you outside of class. You begin to accumulate this experience that goes with your intention. The wounds of our lives come to the fore. You can't be a tenderoni without also feeling sadness and pain. Rosalyn has said: one hand is always open and extended and the other is gently held before you as a filter. Both consolation and desolation, intention and attention. How can we do that? Some things are so hard. We are accompanied. Grateful for Mary putting her deep joy into her faith, and for Rosalyn's deep prayer—putting faith into words and movement. I am reminded of Leonard Cohen's phrase, 'a broken hallelujah.'"

"Thanks to Mary and Rosalyn and for your overcoming an initial hesitation in choosing this book. Thank you to Victoria and Joel for making the online experience seamless and for the gift of the resource page. I'm so grateful for my classmates. I thought this would be a book about how to forgive. I had always thought that forgiveness is transactional. Now I am focused on tenderness and compassion. I feel like a PR person for Homeboy Industries, for tenderness and compassion. The more all of us can bring those concepts out, the more there will be a way opening. I will always remember that from this book. A real life experience: I have had a very distant relationship with my sister in law. I've never had a conversation with her one on one. I was hoping that we might explore these topics. She has indicated that this is of interest. We went to lunch. I entered with my heart beating, nervous. My sister in law and I spent 3 hours at lunch, just sharing. This is how much the book has impacted me. I had the joy of attending a special needs bingo night. As I was laughing, enjoying myself, I remembered that people often approach Fr. Greg with either "you are so wonderful" or "how can you possibly do this?" It made me realize how many marginalized communities need something like Homeboy. Special needs community experiences are marked by some of the same invisibility and/or rejection. Same is true for the terminally ill. How can we take intention and attention into those communities? Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"The history of humankind is a history of war and violence. We have to integrate our shadows, learn how to attend our energy. Forgiveness is the transformation of our energy, through the work of God. We can't transform on our own. Forgiveness (past) leads to reconciliation (present) and perhaps to trust (future). This involves our own choices. The reality of war is with us. Yesterday we all saw a Ukrainian soldier who was killed in captivity by Russians. I spoke with Ukrainian soldiers who wanted to kill Russian prisoners of war. I told them we needed to avoid that. We could trade Russian soldiers for our Ukrainian soldiers. Then a good priest celebrated mass and led them to allow the transformation of their intentions, to let go of the desire to kill. I'm grateful for Mary, Rosalyn and all of you who understand that you have to forgive."

“When I was reviewing all the treasures of this book, I went back to the insight that we are all sacramental to the core. Reality is sacramental, and sacraments are everywhere. As I behold this Zoom screen, all of your faces are sacramental. I’ve felt for a long time that God is in the roundness of things and that God is a weaver. Once our threads are crossed and our lives are woven together, we are held together in the Spirit. Today’s prayer immediately took me to my friend Erin’s funeral. She’d worked at Catholic Worker House. Her husband sang a David Kaufman song. Erin always quoted Micah: “Act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly with your God.” If we are sacraments, and we go through this journey of healing, we discover that the circle of God’s kinship is boundless. I was so taken by the text on p. 97. There’s a divine thread through everything, and the weaving of God, who loves us tenderly and without bounds, is beautiful. It’s been difficult for me to see how our country is treating those who are seeking asylum. It’s hard to be with friends who don’t want to allow them to be here. P. 96—the painting of the Asian child with the tag on his clothes, implying he is in an internment camp—so moving. How am I to make this day a prayer? A sacrament? Thanks to Joel, Victoria, Mary and Rosalyn for making a beautiful loom with this class.”

“Thanks to Joel and Victoria for patience with me as I learned about an online class. And to Mary and Rosalyn. On p. 18 it says “Rejoice.” That picture, and the one of the little girl as Guadalupe were the ones that drew me. I kept thinking, “All God wanted you to do was allow him to enjoy you.” I know now that there is JOY in the sacred heart of Jesus. When my mother died, I thought the last day would be forever. I read pp. 30-31 and it made me remember that day. Mom had said, “Don’t forget me.” I was bemoaning the fact that my sister wanted to move my mom to a nursing home. Then my mom died very quickly. Now I see this truth: “God longs for us. Joy comes, and also suffering.” I was also moved by the boy Israel who could respond to the mass because of being in Juvenile Hall. Vatican II did it for me, turned me around. One of the great documents from Vatican II is titled “Joy and Hope.” Jesus’ first sermon: “I have come to bring good news to the poor.” I pray for all of us that we can follow him. When I was a principal at a school, there was a sign there that read, “Kindness practiced here.” I wanted to say, “Where?” The school was consolidated, as happens with Catholic schools. I was asked to step down. Thank goodness I am remembering that they did what they thought was best. I had to learn to be kind, too. I saw a young man yesterday, with no shirt, covered with tattoos. I’ve got to learn to share the world with others who are not like me.”

“Thanks to Rosalyn and Mary. There’s so much to cover! Joel and Victoria, you are angels. You make a zoom class easy. I did not know *lectio divina* before this class. I plan on using that practice more. I keep coming back to restoration and resilience. Without God we can’t bounce back. I have been working in prison ministry for 8 years. This book is not about steps to forgiveness. Some points from the book that stuck with me: p. 39 not being defined by your past. P. 75 being tired of being tired. This is such a beautiful book; I could not write in it. I decided to use stickies to mark the particular pages that spoke to me. This material is very close to my heart. I know that in my work with women in jail, I need to be with them. They are very hard on themselves. They need to know they are loved. I am using the Jesus prayer a lot.”

“Because of this book, this class has used different parts of our brains. I’ve felt communion with the class. That has filled in gaps that I’d felt because we weren’t doing this in person. I got a lot out of Fabian’s talk; listening to someone who has been formed by Fr. Greg. I love the little girl ensconsed in the flower. Make me feel protected and cared for. I feel like I’ve made progress in forgiveness after a divorce. I have a real sense of equanimity.”

“This class has been priceless to me. I cried during today’s body prayer. Tears are very healing. I have been able through class to make some progress that is foundational. I’m having glimpses of a new paradigm. Stopping. Being still. Stepping into each day with gratitude. It has made me a softer person. We are called to BE with each other. P. 46—the Lord comes to us disguised as ourselves. I am very grateful.”

“A quotation from Zig Zigler: “The way you see them is the way you treat them. The way you treat them is what they become.” I’ve thought about that line a lot. The book leads us to know this from Fr. Greg’s words and Fabian’s art. I follow a man on Instagram who takes photos of ordinary people, after he asks their permission. Fabian and Fr. Greg, like that man, are helping broken people see themselves in a new way. I have had a personal experience of being treated well and seen for who I am. This is about learning to see anew and to perceive others anew. Through the offerings from Oblate Continuing Education, I’ve become more resilient and loving. Because of having been in foster care, and having been homeless, I have empathy but it’s hard to cross over into kinship. It’s hard to move past the fear and be drawn to kinship. I crossed over into kinship with a homeless man at church. This book was challenging. It triggered a lot of things in dreams. I had to read it early in the day rather than at night. It’s not just head knowledge, but heart knowledge. I leave you with a humble and grateful heart.”

“Thanks to Mary and Rosalyn for kindness, humor and authenticity. This book is changing my image of God. Fr. Greg writes that we are unshakeably good, and that has really helped me. The stories told by Mary and Rosalyn, by Fr. Greg, have been a significant part of the class for me. The one I’ve shared most is the one where he writes, “The Lord is exhausted.” My favorite quote from Anthony de Mello: “Behold the One beholding you and smiling.” And I think of Hosea 11:4 “I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.” Another example of God’s tenderness. I do know there’s a new softness in me.”

“This class has been an experience of what someone has called a “fall out of grace.” These two hours have been so significant. Fr. Boyle’s writing really speaks to me. I ordered his other 3 books, and have read two of them. He reminds me of Henri Nouwen and of Julian of Norwich. If Henri Nouwen and Julian of Norwich had a love child, that would be Fr. Greg Boyle! This book has led me to see how I am loved, and how I want to be this way. I have been led to see the grace that anoints the one who offers forgiveness and the one who receives it. Because it is God who is doing this, it is truly possible in God that we can forgive everyone everything. This class has led me to see the barrio where I live as holy ground. I am so grateful to be here.”

"I feel so touched by being able to walk this journey of forgiveness. We've all had life circumstances, we all have experiences of resentment and bitterness. The lesson for me: be more patient with myself and others. Allow forgiveness to unfold. Ideas are percolating in me that are leading to forgive with no expectation. These classes have been like a season of spring. I have felt a desire to reclaim myself. I am Polish. I moved to the States at a young age. I grew up being told, "You must have fallen off the gypsy wagon," meaning that I was not like the rest of the family. That used to hurt me. Now I think it's a gift. Thank you for helping me accept God's acceptance of me. Thanks to all of you: I will cherish this experience. I'm moved by the healing power emerging here. We are like plants learning to lean toward the light."

"Thanks to all who have made the class possible. Mary and Rosalyn's reflections fit so well with the text. The book and the class have helped open our hearts. The readings from Fr. Greg have an openness that shines through. This helps me to open my heart. Hopefully this will lead to compassion and kinship. My husband has been involved with a homeless community. I have seen kinship develop."

"I'm so blown away by everything everyone has offered. Four words stand out for me: kinship, with-ness, joy, gratitude. Going through the class during the war in Ukraine and my son's divorce, I feel like I am in a boot camp experience. Years ago, when I was selling a house, I was lying down in the grass in the front yard with my young son, and I had the feeling that all roles fell away. We were fellow travelers in the universe."

"I am grateful to Joel, Victoria, Mary and Rosalyn. I'm so impressed with my fellow participants' openness and vulnerability. I had to go to Michigan for my mother in law's funeral. I was able to be with my late husband's family. There was a lot of unfinished business, and I was able to be there in a different way. I've shared this book with others. Though I'm more of a print person, I really felt that Fabian's art enriched the experience. Everything IS sacramental. Those brought up in a liturgical tradition are perhaps predisposed to be alert for the everyday sacraments."