Forgiveness Headlines

A king was settling accounts with his servants. A servant who owed a large debt begged to be forgiven instead of being taken into slavery. The king forgave him, but the servant who was forgiven then went to another servant who owed *him* a little money and had him thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the king heard about it he made the servant he had previously forgiven pay all he owed.

Your Local Source for News and Views

The Pardoner's Post

Outrage at Graffiti Strike Against Teacher

Last week, a teacher Beaconsfield School was the target of an ink bombing attack by 'Slammer', a local graffiti artist. Slammer is widely known for using graffiti to address social justice issues. The work comes amid mounting rumors that a student was slapped by a staff member and shows a bearded figure with glasses striking a student. There is speculation that the subject is drama teacher Tim Waters, a two-time recipient of the district's Teacher of the Year award. "This is outrageous. Tim is the kind of teacher every parent dreams their child will have!" says Chelsea Jones, whose son is a student at the school. Lynn Knowles, a Beaconsfield graduate said, "He's the most positive person I've ever known. He would never hit a student!" Parents have started a Facebook page in support of the teacher. More than 800 have joined the campaign, and the number is climbing daily. School officials confirmed rumors that Mr. Waters has been asked to take a leave of absence pending the outcome of further police investigations. School Superintendent Frank Rogers says the allegations are being taken seriously to protect students. Slammer is being sought for questioning by the police.

Teen in Critical Condition

Police are appealing for witnesses after a fight in a parking lot at Albion High School yesterday left a teen hospitalized in critical condition. Police are reviewing video footage taken by an eyewitness. It appears that a male student lashed out after being provoked by racist comments. He is being held in police custody and will be released later today pending bail. If the case goes to court he may face charges of assault and battery, which carry a minimum six month prison sentence.

Sleepy Students vs. District

Drivers will no longer stop for students who miss their official bus pick-up time. This has angered students. James Siesta, whose 6:15 a.m. stop is one of the district's earliest says, "This is stupid! The bus passes my stop twice! There's no reason the bus can't pick me up when it passes a second time at 6:40." Sleep studies indicate getting up early is hard for teens. Administrators are defending the policy change, saying it cuts district costs.

Sobbing Woman Apologizes After Public Outrage

A tearful Shanon Biggs apologized and promised to repay the $1400 she took after it fell from Alan Bruce's pocket and landed by her feet in a local store. The incident, captured by surveillance cameras, showed Biggs abandoning purchases at the register and hurrying to an exit. Police showed the footage on TV, and tips led to her speedy arrest. Police say she confessed and has admitted that she spent the money on her children and overdue bills. Biggs waived a trial and agreed to pay Bruce back. "It meant a lot to me that she apologized," said Bruce. "She was crying, and I told her she would be all right." Biggs faces charges of theft of lost property.

Teen Caught Selling Stolen Calculators

A local youth was caught selling stolen calculators. He denied charges of selling stolen goods when questioned saying, "I had no idea they were stolen. I bought them from another student." The teen was released after two hours of questioning by police. The investigation continues.

Legal Battle Pits Parents Against School District

Parents of a student who was expelled for posting hateful comments on a classmate's Facebook page are suing the school. The case tests Washington school district's cyber bullying policy that went into effect two months ago. The student says she meant no harm and that the comments have been taken out of context and blown out of proportion.

Swimmer Facing Drug Charges

World swimming champion Jon Brown was stripped of his title when trace amounts of steroids were detected in a urine sample taken on the day of a recent race. His doctor confirmed that he had prescribed oral steroids as a standard measure for treating severe poison ivy within the last month. Richard Higgs, who placed second, said he would sue officials if the judges ruled in Brown's favor. An investigation is underway.

How do we forgive the debts of others? This activity presents students with a variety of situations in newspaper headline format and prompts them to consider whether a situation warrants forgiveness or whether a different response is more appropriate.

1. A servant who was forgiven large debts went out and treated a servant who owed him a small amount of money harshly. If you were the king, how difficult would it be for you to forgive the servant's actions?
2. We are going to look at some situations in which people have done things for which they could be punished or forgiven.
3. Distribute copies of *The Pardoner's Post* (p. 2) and read each scenario.
4. Distribute *Pardoner's Questions* (p. 3) and pencils or pens. Ask students to check the boxes next to the responses they agree with. They can agree with more than one statement in each section.
5. Share and discuss responses.
6. What does the Word teach about forgiveness? Hand out copies of *Forgiveness Quotations* and choose a selection or two from the first section to read with the students.
7. When is holding someone accountable for what they have done an important part of being able to forgive them? (When harm has been done, e.g. stolen money or property that needs to be restored; if there is loss of life, etc.) Choose a passage from the Heavenly Doctrines to read aloud from the *Forgiveness Quotations* (p. 4).
8. Do these teachings change your responses to any of the situations in *The Pardoner's Post*?

Materials Needed for Each Student

copies of *The Pardoner's Post* p. 2, *Pardoner's Questions* p. 3, and *Forgiveness Quotations* p. 4; pen or pencil

New Church Concept Judgment

A person who exercises justice and judgment by punishing the evil and rewarding the good is in charity and mercy. There is charity in punishing the evil, because we are motivated by zeal to reform them, and at the same time to protect good people, so that they are not hurt by the evil. In this way a person consults the welfare of a person who is in evil, and expresses good feeling toward them, as well as to others, and to the good of all. The good of life is never possible unless it comes from charity toward the neighbor, because it looks to this, and involves it. See *Arcana Coelestia* 2417.7

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Pardoner's Questions

Outrage at Graffiti Strike Against Teacher

☐ If caught, the artist should be punished for committing a hate crime, regardless of whether or not there is any truth to the accusations.

☐ If the artist's accusations are true, the artist should be forgiven.

☐ The teacher has a right to be angry and seek damages from 'Slammer', whether or not there is any truth to the accusations.

Teen in Critical Condition

☐ The student acted in self-defense and should be forgiven.

☐ Hateful comments cause more harm than hitting; people making hateful comments should be punished.

☐ Injuries are more serious than stupid words; the student who struck out should pay for his actions.

Sleepy Students vs. District

☐ Making an exception would be wrong. James should get up earlier.

☐ The driver should ignore the rules. 6:15 is too early to have to get on a bus.

☐ James should find a different way to get to school, as the current bus policy cuts district fuel costs.

Sobbing Woman Apologizes After Public Outrage

☐ Shannon Biggs has admitted her mistake and apologized; she should be forgiven.

☐ Shannon Biggs was caught on camera deliberately taking something she knew was not hers; she should face the consequences.

☐ Bruce has forgiven Biggs so the law should forgive her too.

Teen Caught Selling Stolen Calculators

☐ A first time offender, he should do community service.

☐ Since he had no idea the calculators were stolen he should be forgiven.

☐ He knew what was going on; he should pay for what he did.

Legal Battle Pits Parents Against School District

☐ Believe the student's statement; let her return to school.

☐ Suspend the student. Does she genuinely feel bad about what she did? Allow her to return to school after counseling.

☐ This is a hate crime; expel the student.

Swimmer Facing Drug Charges

☐ Everyone knows the rules; Jon should not have raced.

☐ Jon had no idea the drug would still be in his system; his doctor's word should clear him.

☐ Jon had no idea the drug would still be in his system, but he should receive no special treatment and should accept the penalty.

Forgiveness Quotations

Quotations from Scripture:

But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared (Psalm 130:4).

To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him (Daniel 9:9).

Peter came to Jesus and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26).

Quotations from the Heavenly Doctrines:

A person who exercises justice and judgment by punishing the evil and rewarding the good is in charity and mercy. There is charity in punishing the evil, because we are motivated by zeal to reform them, and at the same time to protect good people, so that they are not hurt by the evil. In this way a person consults the welfare of a person who is in evil, and expresses good feeling toward him, as well as to others, and to the good of all. The good of life is never possible unless it comes from charity toward the neighbor, because it looks to this, and involves it. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 2417.7)

The judgments of a just judge are all judgments of charity, even when he inflicts a fine or a penalty on the guilty evil; for in this way he is amending them, and guarding against their doing harm to other guiltless people, who are the neighbor. For he is like a father who, if he loves his children, corrects them when they do wrong. (*Charity* 163)