

What can solve the serious problem of iron-poor blood? We have been told: Geritol. What can we do about the nasty condition of gingivitis? We can use Crest toothpaste. Now very carefully and delicately, what do we do about the painful, irritating, and lethargic feeling of constipation? To be more specific, emotional and spiritual constipation? Let's find out.

In our 1<sup>st</sup> reading we hear how "the sinner hugs tightly wrath and anger". Other conditions mentioned are "nourishing anger" and "refusing mercy." These are forms of emotional and spiritual constipation. They keep us stuck and stymied in the past. They deprive us of healing, joy, and peace. They interrupt harmony, friendship and community.

In the Gospel Peter thinks forgiving a person 7 times is sufficient.... perhaps even extraordinarily generous. 7 times and no more. After that he and we can hold onto hurts, grudges, and resentments; hostilities, angers and jealousies; bitterness, rage and painful memories. Jesus surprises Peter and gives the cure for emotional and spiritual constipation. Jesus' remedy: unending forgiveness. There is no limit to forgiving. In 3 words Jesus startles, shocks, and stuns Peter and us. The 3 words: Forgive. Forgive. Forgive.

Simple. But not easy. Forgiving takes grace. Forgiving requires the intention to forgive. And forgiving is an act of the will. Loosening up, lightening up and letting go also assist us to forgive.

When we forgive: We do not approve. We do not condone. We do not forget. We do not encourage. We do not agree. We forgive as God forgives us. Forgiving is a lifetime challenge. It is a challenge worth taking. It's the hallmark of a holy person and a saint.

In the closing story, imagine WE are the Mother. What would WE do in this situation?

This is from the comic strip FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE:

6-year-old Michael is trying to build an elaborate tower out of his set of blocks. But the blocks keep toppling over...again and again and again. In utter frustration, Michael screams "Stupid, dumb, crummy.." and kicks the pile of blocks across the room. His mother has had enough of his behavior and drags Michael off to bed. "No! Ahh! Don't wanna go to bed! Waah!!!" he protests, but Mom will have none of it. "To bed—now!"

As his exhausted Mom is about to turn off the light, Michael, tucked in his bed, asks, "Mom? Aren't you gonna kiss me goodnight?"

"To tell you the truth, Mike, when you act like that....I just don't feel like kissing you at all!"

"But, Mom," Michael pleads, "that's when I need it the most!"