SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND FORGIVENESS-ASKING

Two Personal Narratives and a Discussion

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The leadership methodology that I incorporate in this essay of restorative justice and forgiveness is that of servant-leadership. Robert Greenleaf coined the term *servant-leader* in the 1960s and 1970s after his involvement with tertiary institutions (Greenleaf 1977, 5). Larry Spears, a close disciple of Greenleaf, extracted the ensuing ten characteristics as essential to the development of servant-leadership: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Spears 2004, 8–9). Awareness, persuasiveness, foresight, stewardship, and a desire for healing are qualities that can motivate individuals to seek reconciliation. The purpose of this essay is to reflect on forgiveness-asking at a personal level. I will recount two scenarios in my life (biological family and Jesuit family) where I personally sought reconciliation, and also articulate the insights and graces that these encounters of forgiveness-asking brought to my life.

This essay reveals the nexus between servant-leadership, nonviolence philosophy, and forgiveness. Just as a servant-leader first desires to serve, he or she must also first desire to ask forgiveness instead of waiting for the other to ask forgiveness first. The first plot of the essay will be a succinct exposition of servant-leadership and the superiority of nonviolence. In essence, servant-leadership is the tapestry on which this essay is woven. This will be followed by two personal forgiveness-asking experiences. The focus of the two narratives is to disclose how sour incidents collapsed through the lens of forgiveness-asking and budded into flowers of graces, restoration, and growth. In the termination of this essay, I will do a characteristic analysis of the insights I gained from the experiences of forgiveness-asking.

In describing who a servant-leader is, Greenleaf emphasizes that the first step to becoming a servant-leader is the natural desire to serve (Greenleaf 1977, 27). This conscious choice is followed by a conscious aspiration to lead (ibid.). The gulf between the leader-first and the servant-first is wide; the servant-first has a greater proclivity to persevere in paying prior attention to another's needs (ibid., 28). Leaders who "sustained intentness of listening" can receive invaluable insights and ideas that assist them to pave direction for a family or an organization (ibid., 30). Greenleaf also thinks that servant-leaders are highly intuitive, have foresight, and are prudent: "The prudent [person] is one who constantly thinks of the 'now' as the moving concept in which the past, the present moment, and the future are an organic unity" (ibid., 38). He distinguishes between the formal and informal structures in organizations (ibid., 72–73). The formal is like a carved pathway with specificity of authority, routine operations, and rules to follow in anticipated situations, and this does not give sufficient room for leadership; leadership takes place more powerfully in the informal structure where there is an ocean for creativity, "constructive interpersonal relationships," calculated risk taking, well thought-out inducement, and judicious regulation of priorities (ibid.).

Paterson uses the category of virtues to speak of the dimensions of servant-leadership (Van Dierendonck 2010, 5; Wallace 2005, 115). Agape love, humility, vision, altruism, empowerment, service, and trust are seven virtues of a servant-leader (Wallace 2005, 115). Servant-leadership is an ethical form of leadership (ibid., 116), which also promotes compassion, justice, stewardship, community, human dignity, personal responsibility, and character (ibid., 126). Instead of focusing on self, the servant-leader focuses on others (Stone, Russell, and Patterson 2003, 4). Servant-leaders are motivated to meet the needs of their followers so that the follower can prosper (Wallace 2005, 4). By nature these servant-leaders have a proclivity to lift others and make them wiser, freer, and healthier (Greenleaf 1977, 241).

Similarities between servant-leadership and transformational leadership include people-oriented type of leadership, vision, generation of trust, respect or credibility, influence, risk sharing, delegation, role modeling, mentoring, teaching, communication, listening, empowering of followers, and valuing of followers (Stone et al., 4, 8). Both spectra of leadership emphasize "individualized consideration and appreciation of followers" (ibid., 4). The theories of servant-leadership and transformational leadership complement

each other instead of oppose each other. Van Dierendonck sees this overlap between servant-and transformational leadership (Van Dierendonck 2010, 7), and shows that Spears advanced ten characteristics of servant-leadership, Laub expounded six clusters, Russell and Stone differentiated nine functional characteristics and eleven additional characteristics, and Patterson has seven dimensions based on virtue ethics (ibid., 5). Out of a plurality of different portrayals of servant-leadership, van Dierendonck discerns six characteristics: empowering and developing people, humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, providing direction, and stewardship (ibid., 6). He came up with his six characteristics by using empirical methods from the measurements of servant-leadership and by discriminating "between antecedents, behavior, mediating processes and outcomes" (ibid., 5).

From the foregoing description of a servant-leader, one can surmise that a servant-leader will readily forgive and seek forgiveness since he or she is a good listener, empathic, aware, and persuasive. A servant-leader is also committed to the growth and freedom of others, committed to building a community of love, and has foresight. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela had foresight for a new United States and a new Republic of South Africa respectively. Rather than resort to violence and retaliation to achieve their causes, they turned toward nonviolence, love, and reconciliation. Foresight is about thinking about the consequences of one's decision in the long term (Gunnarsson and Blohm 2011, 78). A leader who promotes compassion, justice, stewardship, community, human dignity, personal responsibility, and character will more likely generate peace, healing, and goodwill in relationships and organizations. Since servant-leaders focus on others instead of self, they are motivated to meet the needs of others. I think this spirit and attitude of wanting the best in others disposes servant-leaders to seek reconciliation, forgiveness, and restoration rather than discord, grudges, and retribution. When a family or organization is based on discord, the tension will infect relationships and create a dysfunctional structure of interactions in the family or organization. On the other hand, a harmonious relationship is also infectious, inasmuch as it leads to smooth and meaningful relationships in a family or organization. A servant-leader refuses the praxis of domination. Freire stated, "Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the dominator and masochism in the dominated" (Freire 1993, 89).

Gandhi had a heart full of love and forgiveness, and he adapted *satyagraha* (soul force) in galvanizing the Indian people to seek liberation through nonviolence. Gandhi said that he believed nonviolence was infinitely superior

to violence and that forgiveness was more heroic than retribution or punishment (King 1969, 161). During Martin Luther King Jr.'s visit to India, he learned that patience was a virtue in the praxis of nonviolence (ibid., 164). In this regard, there is a nexus between a servant-leader and nonviolence. A servant-leader avoids the impatience of a dominant leader. In the commandments of nonviolence proposed by King for the civil rights movement, the practitioner seeks justice and reconciliation rather than victory (ibid., 202). He or she also sacrifices personal wishes so that all persons might be free (ibid., 203). There is hence a desire to make others more free. This desire for the psychic liberation of others is a tenet in servant-leadership.

The nonviolent commandments also exhort practitioners to perform regular service for others and to desist from the violence of fist, tongue, and heart (King 1969, 203). Service is accordingly another fixture between nonviolence philosophy and servant-leadership. In nonviolent movement, we are also commanded to seek justice and reconciliation and not victory (ibid., 202). This command dovetails with restorative justice. Walking and talking in the manner of love and making personal sacrifices for the freedom of others are also part of the commandments of nonviolent movement (ibid., 202–203). Love, sacrifice, and freedom of others all fit with the characteristics of a servant-leader. *Satyagraha* or soul force is the basic idea of Gandhi's nonviolence or civil resistance (ibid.,163). Retribution, grudges, and unforgiveness are based on a heart of violence, while restoration, forgiveness, compassion toward self and offenders are rooted in a nonviolent heart and spirit. Martin Luther King Jr. practiced personal forgiveness. According to his wife, Coretta Scott King, whenever Dr. King did something wrong, it pricked his conscience, and if it were possible, "he would always make apologies and seek forgiveness" (ibid., 59).

Like Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. was a servant-leader in his rhetoric and in his deeds as a leader of the nonviolent civil rights movement. Paraphrasing Christ, Martin Luther King Jr. gave a new definition to leadership. King once gave a speech on the subject of greatness and service. It was in the context of the two of Christ's disciples (James Zebedee and John Zebedee) who wanted to have a place of importance in the Kingdom. The other ten disciples were indignant. In this speech, King quickly reminds everyone to be careful about condemning the disciples, because if we inspect our hearts and minds we will notice that we all have that desire to be great (Carson and Holloran 1998, 170). It is seen in the Olympic world, business world, and political world. King says that

psychoanalyst Alfred Adrian contends that the will-to-importance or greatness is the dominant impulse that drives humans (ibid., 171). Hence, when babies are born, they cry bidding for attention (ibid.). Nietzsche taught that the will-to-power is the essence or metaphysics of one's existence and is defined in one's being as one's coming to be (Coffeen 2010). King reminds us that Jesus did not condemn his disciples in their quest for greatness: "If you want to great—wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That's the new definition of greatness" (Carson and Holloran, 1998, 182).

The essence of King's point is that Christ exhorts everyone to transform that desire for greatness into a desire for greatness in service, greatness in love, greatness in humility, greatness in truth, greatness in justice, greatness in generosity, and greatness in forgiveness. Greatness in service is King's new definition of greatness. King says that we all can be great because we all can serve (Carson and Holloran 1998, 182). King's metaphor for this desire to be in front of the parade of life is the "drum major instinct" (ibid., 170–71). It is a powerful force that can be self-destructive and destructive of others if not harnessed. But it becomes meaningful and purposeful if transformed into service. Robert Greenleaf's idea of servant-leadership is reminiscent of King's definition of greatness. If we really desire to lead, we must first desire to serve. Service is what inspires authentic leadership, which is selfless, liberating, and empowering of others. King enlightens that in becoming servants, we simply need a "heart full of grace and a soul generated by love" (Carson and Holloran 1998, 182). Mother Teresa of Calcutta, a Nobel Peace laureate like Martin Luther King Jr., is another servant-leader who cheerfully gathered broken babies, mothers, and fathers from the slums of Calcutta and brought them to a place of remedy, rest, and redemption. She has inspired millions of people across religious walls because to a world full of indigence caused by domination, she brought empowerment, meaning, and liberation through love and service.

PERSONAL FORGIVENESS-ASKING EXPERIENCES: TWO NARRATIVES

First Narrative: With My Dad

It is essential I provide a brief historical, biographical, and geographical frame to this narrative. My parents Leonard and Cecilia wedded in October 25, 1969. My dad was a high school biology teacher, while my mum was a

civil servant. They brought up their five children in Jos, Plateau State (central north of Nigeria) and Ilorin, Kwara State (western Nigeria). My dad first relocated to Ilorin with three of my siblings, while my mum, my youngest brother Joe, and I remained in Jos, pending the right time for the whole family to be together in one city.

When I was finishing high school in Jos, I became a lapsed Catholic. One day, my mother asked me to follow her to church for a Confirmation Mass in a military school, to be celebrated by the then Catholic Bishop of Jos, the late Archbishop Gabriel Gonsum Ganaka (GGG), a close friend of my dad. I told Mum I would come for Mass that day but on the condition that we go to our regular parish (simply because I was also interested in catching sight of a lady friend). Mum said, "Fine, come into the car." But she could not imagine not attending the Bishop's Confirmation Mass and so along the way, she diverted and drove me and my youngest brother to the Mass I was not interested in attending. I was exasperated, but I had no alternative at this point but to attend this Mass. I listened intently to the bishop's sermon, and it changed my life. It remains until this day the best sermon I have ever heard.

This powerful sermon which I never intended to hear moved me to read the Gospel of Matthew and caused a deep religious conversion for me. Eventually, I was spurred on to read the entire New Testament. My passion then was to study medicine, but I also began to think of the priesthood. It eventually became a tug of war: "doctor of the soul or doctor of the body?" I was glad to know that there was possibility for both vocations in the Society of Jesus. Leaving zoological studies at the University of Jos, I joined the Jesuits in Nigeria. After some years of formation in Nigeria, I was missioned to Loyola University of Chicago where I did a degree in philosophy and theology. Subsequently, I returned to Nigeria for regency, a period of apostolic work and teaching.

The next stage of formation (ministry studies in theology) took place at the Hekima Jesuit School of Theology, Nairobi, Kenya. Afterward, I was ordained a priest on July 14, 2001, in Lagos, Nigeria. All family members were present. After serving in two Jesuit apostolates in Nigeria, I was missioned to Boston College where I studied for a Master of Science in teaching in physics. After completing the degree program, the provincial missioned me to pastor a Jesuit parish in Lagos, Nigeria, where I also taught physics in a Jesuit high school. Lagos is in the southwestern part of Nigeria. That is where my sister Ngozi currently lives with her husband Chibuike and

three children. Ben, my immediate younger brother, lives in Edo State, central southern Nigeria, with his wife Judith and three children. Ugo lives in Jos with his wife Adesua and three children, while Joe lives in the Federal Capital Territory (north-central geopolitical zone of Nigeria) with his wife Kelechi and two children.

In June 2007, while I was the parish priest of St. Francis Catholic Church Lagos, I once had the responsibility of hosting the diaconate ordination of nine deacons of Lagos Archdiocese. We had never had such a ceremony in our parish before. We anticipated that many lay people and priests of the Lagos Archdiocese were going to flood our parish. There was an Archdiocesan Planning Committee, but since our parish was the hosting parish I was expected to ensure things went well. My parents (who were residing in Jos at this time) were visiting with my sister and her husband in Lagos during this period. In the midst of the hectic planning period for the ordination, I had gone over to my sister's home to welcome my mum and dad. They told me they would be coming for the diaconate ordination. I was glad they would be coming to witness the ceremony, but I begged of them that I might not be a great host to them in the parish because I would be very busy with events of the ordination ceremony.

On the day of the diaconate ordination, I bore a lot of burden before, during, and after the ceremony. I was anxious trying to ensure the ceremony was perfect. The sanctuary was filled with about ninety priests, and the Mass lasted about three hours. After the Mass, reception was to immediately follow in the parish hall. As pastor of the parish, I was supposed to escort and be with the ordaining prelate. Meanwhile, I realized that things were not quite ready at the parish hall (reception venue). In the midst of the tension, my parents wanted my attention. The big error on my part was that I failed to give proper attention to them. After the ordination, instead of catching my breath and being fulfilled that the ceremony had gone well, I took a long walk disappointed with myself that I let worries and busyness shield me from welcoming my parents. What I had tried to forestall was forlorn. I was angry about the fact that I was leading under stress. I went to my sister's house the following day (after Sunday Mass) to visit with my parents.

Somehow, I was feeling righteous, since I had indicated to my parents that I would be occupied on the day of the ordination. My dad made it clear to me that he was not happy with me. I tried to argue in defense, and my mum tried to make peace between my dad and me. I left my sister's house displeased. That same evening, I took a day off from my parish and went to

our other Jesuit parish in Lagos. The whole ordination ceremony was a paradox. I gave all my energies to the planning and the execution, and it went well for the archdiocese. Everybody was happy, but here I was stressed out and having issues with my dad.

In retrospect, I think the overload of work in the parish exposed how I was engaged in below-the-line thinking. I was working under stress and anxiety. Ferch refers to the work of leadership consultant Paul Nakai, who says that feelings such as anxiety, stress, anger, and fear immerse one at the troubled level or a lower level of consciousness—below-the-line thinking (Ferch 2012, 124–25). I felt I needed reconciliation, and later on I met with the Jesuit pastor in another Jesuit parish that I had gone to for a day off and shared with him this disenchanting experience I had with my dad. He recommended that I create time and travel to Jos (where my parents returned after their time in Lagos) and reconcile with my dad; and that I could present a symbolic gift to my dad. It took me a long time to create time for this journey to Jos. I was consumed with pastoral work, but on a deeper level, I think I was struggling to overcome the inertia to go ask for forgiveness. The next month (July), my dad called me on my birthday to wish me a happy birthday. It was in this same month, on July 31 (the feast of St. Ignatius), that my parish broke ground to commence the construction of Mother Teresa Medical Centre and Cultural Centre. August, September, October got so busy that I kept procrastinating traveling to Jos.

In the month of November, I finally made the move. I boarded a bus to Abuja to first visit one of my younger brothers, Joe. The next day after celebrating Mass in his home, I entered a taxi and traveled to Jos. I wanted it to be a surprise visit to my parents. On reaching Jos, another younger brother (Mike) and his wife (Sandra) picked me up. To my surprise, they told me my parents had traveled to our home town in the south. I got scared! Now that I had made out time to travel a long distance to come ask my dad and mum for forgiveness, they were not around. I became desperate, but persistent. The following day, I entered a bus for an eight to nine hours journey to southern Nigeria.

Before arriving at my destination bus station, I had been able to make phone contact with my dad. He and mum came to pick me up. I was so pleased to see them. I did not tell them why I had traveled down. But after dinner, the moment of "forgiveness-asking" dawned. With just three of us in the living room, I summoned courage and brought back the events of June. I asked forgiveness from them. As I did so a load was removed from

my heart. My dad and mum were very happy and accepted my apologies and at the same time offered words of advice regarding my pastoral duties. I opened the gifts I had brought and presented them to my parents. They were very appreciative of the visit, reconciliation, and gifts. The following day we went back to the bus station. My dad was wearing the shirt I had brought for him. We had a photograph together before I embarked on a journey back to Lagos.

This hurt and reconciliation experience catapulted me toward being more evenhanded in my pastoral work. After my pastoral mission in this parish, my parents came to celebrate with me during a send forth party. I showered them with great hospitality. I could not afford to let any form of responsibility prevent me from spending each available moment with them. My next assignment after St. Francis Parish Lagos was Loyola Jesuit College Abuja, where I served as a vice principal and teacher. It was during my time in Abuja that my siblings and I made efforts to relocate my aging parents from Jos to Abuja because of the height of the Christian-Muslim strain in Jos. I personally traveled with them in moving some of their property from Abuja to Jos.

In October 25, 2009, my parents celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary. I mobilized my siblings and we were able to plan a beautiful commemoration for Dad and Mum. Since the ceremony took place in Abuja, most of the weight of planning the ceremony was on me, but I was delighted to give my heart and soul to it in gratitude for my parents' love for us. Although I was meticulous in preparing for their ruby anniversary, preparing for it was less tedious compared to the preparation for the ordination ceremony in Lagos. Looking back, I think my level of consciousness at Abuja was above-the-line thinking; not because I do not like Lagos, but because the magnitude of responsibilities in Abuja was a little less. Using above-the-line thinking, one feels contentment, ease, gracefulness, gratitude, optimism, forgiveness, inspiration, love, and humor in the midst of challenge (Ferch 2012, 194, 126–28). I acknowledge I did have these feelings in Lagos, but anxieties and the load of work conspired to drown them for me.

After the forgiveness-asking experience, I had also grown to become more sensitive to the needs of my parents. I am so grateful to God that my parents are alive. During my time in Abuja, before tertianship (a stage of Jesuit formation), I fought for my parents' pension funds. Because of corruption in the civil service, some staff members at the Federal Secretariat at Abuja were dilly-dallying with the pensions of retired civil servants. This

is one of the reflections of the massive top to bottom corruption. I had to personally make many visits to the office of civil service to fight for my parents who are pensioners and whose pensions were denied them for a long time. Thankfully, the government finally approved their pensions. After my tertianship, my provincial missioned me to serve as pastor in another Jesuit parish in Benin City. During my time there, I made arrangements through the help of a parishioner in the medical profession for surgical procedures for my dad. My dad and mum stayed in our parish during my dad's surgery. Subsequently, I spent quality time with my parents in May last year before my new mission to Spokane, Washington, for doctoral studies in leadership. We went to the Millennium Park in Abuja to be with nature. I celebrated daily Masses for them. They pray daily for me and I pray daily for them. This is an excerpt of a tribute I wrote in the program of their ruby wedding anniversary.

> Dad, Whenever I went to you for advice I came out with insights and a better direction....Beaming with smile, you are a man of peace....You gave us moral lessons of life in many stories you told....Wherever you go, fruits, flowers, crops and trees were planted....Mum, You are the first to take me to school (Corona, Bukuru). You gave me depth and vision in the basics of Mathematics and English....You radiate joy, warmth, goodness and tender love....Your deep sense of history broadened my vision.... Papa and Mama: You both pray together and taught the family the importance of prayer. You are both the first to get up and the last to go to bed. You used a family bicycle bell to wake us up to prayer and when the bell was not around you used a gong. You are the first to teach me about God and you quietly sowed the seeds of my vocation to the Catholic priesthood. You are our first role models and you were truly dedicated to God, family, and work. Your words of wisdom gave direction to our lives. The family Motto "Goodness for happiness" has challenged us to be people of conscience. You could both imagine a good future when the present was gloomy. You always encouraged going to church together, travelling together and helped us to imbibe the power of positive thinking. Your desire for family unity ushered oneness of mind and harmonious living. (October 2009, Fortieth Wedding Anniversary Brochure)

Second Narrative: With A Jesuit Companion

The other forgiveness-asking story that I would like to share occurred at Gonzaga University. The conflict developed in a flash, with one of my finest Jesuit companions. Intriguingly, it stemmed from our different views on the

conflict between Galileo Galilei and the Catholic Church. Father Michael Maher is a brilliant historian and he is the chair of the Catholic Studies Department. He is also the chaplain of the Knights of St. Columbus. I have a lot of respect for him and I appreciate his insightful perspectives on history. Currently, one of the courses he has designed to teach students at Gonzaga is the history of the Society of Jesus. Whenever people make controversial historical statements, he is one person I can confidently go to for clarification.

However, during lunch on February 25, 2013, while having a lively conversation, I asked Maher's views about the controversy surrounding Pope Pius XII and the Jews. Maher utilized historical facts to explain that Pius XII was not anti-Semitic, but that Pope Pius loved the culture of the German people. I was satisfied with Maher's argument. As our conversation progressed, I brought up the Galileo controversy with the certitude that the church was absolutely wrong in this controversy. My premises were Galileo's heliocentric view of the universe and the posthumous apology of Pope John Paul II in 2000. Maher cautioned me about my certitude in my position and said I should not conclude Galileo was right. I got emotional, thinking Maher was just blindly defending the church. But what Maher was doing was simply trying to let me know that the Galileo controversy was more complex than it might appear. Maher argued that the Galileo affair has to be juxtaposed with the models of the universe at that time.

Maher's point was that the church was wrong, but so was Galileo, whose circular part was wrong. However, I took the view that the church officials did not accept any heliocentric view. All this was an unplanned conversation, and the meal generated more tension than light. The tension forced me to do more research on the Galileo affair with the church and review the models of the universe of Ptolemy, Copernicus, Brahe, Galileo, and Kepler. I found out that even though John Paul II apologized, the Galileo affair was more complex than it seems. Oops! Maher was right in the point he was making. Though there was no major rift between Maher and me, I felt a need to apologize to him immediately. I imagined the context for the forgiveness-asking. I also contemplated what words of apology I would say to him.

Before leaving my room for community dinner that day, I was hoping I would see Maher at dinner. As I went in to get my meal, Maher also came in to get his. After saying hello, I quickly seized the opportunity and asked forgiveness for the afternoon argument. My apology changed the tone in our relationships, and tensions immediately dissolved like sodium chloride in water, and defenses were dropped. We started a new table in the community

dinner room, and we had a wonderful dinner. A coincidental irony is that the afternoon controversy and debate took place in broad daylight, while our dinner took place in the evening. A member of the community who had witnessed the afternoon controversy at lunch (2:30 p.m.) was not sure if he was seeing correctly as he kept starring at Maher and me now having a peaceful conversation by around 6:30. To me, this was a formidable experience of a shift from conflict to grace.

The following day, February 26, Maher and I met again at another table for dinner. As my other Jesuit companions left for other businesses for the evening, Maher and I remained and kept chatting. Our rich and interesting conversations took us to different topical landscapes. He shared with me about his experience on the day Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. This fateful day was on Maher's birthday (April 4, 1968), while he was living with his parents in Wisconsin. He shared how his dad (a medical professor at Marquette University) had to drive their black maid home due to the tensions in the city. There were fears of riots in Wisconsin, and they eventually happened. We chatted about the history of the Jesuits and shared many anecdotes and jokes. I cannot remember laughing more loudly with Maher than I did at this meal.

The next day, Maher presided at our Jesuit community Mass and gave an inspiring sermon in which he wove leadership, service, and Pope Benedict's last day as pontiff. During dinner, he and I met again in the dining hall, and I complimented him for his brilliant sermon. I began to wonder if my constant uncalculated meetings with Maher after our debate at lunch and my forgiveness-asking were mere coincidences or the fruits of forgiveness-asking. It seems to me it is the latter. On March 2, Maher and I met again on the second floor. With so much fish to fry, I was contemplating whether to watch the first half of the Gonzaga-Portland basketball game or the second half. My intuition told me Maher was looking for a basketball ticket. I asked him if he wanted my ticket. He was hesitant, since he did not want to deprive me of seeing the game. And finally I brought out the ticket and said, "If you want to see the whole game (first half and second half) then you should have my ticket." He replied, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes." And that settled it. After he received the ticket, I was immediately reminded of the ongoing phenomenon that I saw as manifestations of forgiveness-asking. There was a new change in dynamics in interaction with Maher that made me meet Maher at the right time, made me intuitive to know that he was looking for a basketball ticket, and made me generous to offer my ticket

to him. I ended up watching the second half of the basketball game on the television screen with some other Jesuit companions.

CONCLUSION: INSIGHTS GAINED AND A DISCUSSION

Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Within the best of us there is some evil, and within the worst of us, there is some good" (Carson and Holloran 1998, 46). He also said that when we look in the face of every person and see deep down in that person "the image of God," we begin to love him or her in spite of what he or she does (ibid.). I believe that one of the challenges for every servant-leader is to recognize and promote the element of good in others. Abraham Lincoln demonstrated this goodwill during his presidency. Where his friends saw only the element of bad in Edwin Stanton (Lincoln's former adversary), Lincoln saw a quality of good leadership in Stanton, and Lincoln made Stanton the United States Secretary of War. I think the realization of seeing the other side of the coin (both our coin and the coin of the other) can lead us to seek forgiveness as well as forgive others. When we know that we and others are in need of redemption, forgiveness becomes a mutual redemptive act. Forgiveness-asking experiences make me realize my shadows. Gaining the light of forgiveness energizes me to also pass on the light of forgiveness to others who hurt me or may hurt me.

The Greek verb *to forgive* is *aphiemi,* which means to unbind, to untie, or to let go (Hart 2007). In the Hebrew language, forgiveness (*nasa, ns')* means to lift away, to carry away, or to remove (Walts and Gulliford 2004, 31). When one is forgiven he or she is untied and lifted. This description of forgiveness matches my experiences of forgiveness-asking. When I recognize my need to ask for forgiveness, I recognize that my heart is tied and needs to be untied. I need the person that I had hurt by omission or commission to lift up my burden and free my heart. In the events of forgiveness-asking from my dad and Maher, their respective acceptances helped to unbind me, and I felt lifted and free to fly again.

Looking back, I feel the experience from conflict to grace with Maher was providential, as it occurred while I writing this essay. Insights from forgiveness and restorative justice motivated me to immediately ask for forgiveness instead of permitting fate to evaporate the strings of friction that were quickly being knit through dispute. I think every debate and discussion of life should constantly aid us toward a return to our common brotherhood and sisterhood. That is our strength! Our lives are meant to be lives of grace

and not conflict. If I had not planned and decided to apologize, I would have missed an opportunity when Maher also walked into the kitchen to get his food. One of the insights I gained from my experience of forgiveness-asking of my dad and Maher is that I took total responsibility in asking for pardon. I could not pass that responsibility to someone else. I also took responsibility in owning my fault.

A pit of conflict can turn into a mecca of life and grace. In reflecting and articulating my experience of forgiveness-asking, I observed growth in humility, wisdom, freedom, authenticity, and wholeness. Forgiveness-asking has a power of transforming one to adopt the attitude of a servant-leader. Forgiveness-asking is also a journey and a process. In my Forgiveness-asking with my dad and Maher, the journey was both physical and spiritual. As I reflected on these experiences, it reminded me of the journey of Victor and Thomas in the film *Smoke Signals*(1998) by the great American poet and screenwriter Sherman Alexie, a man of Native American (Spokane and Coeur D'Alene) descent who has faced his own generational demons in the context of colonization of Native Americans, and liberation through story and journey. Both Victor and Thomas were traveling physically and interiorly, and Victor eventually experienced inner healing. Healing, which is "to make whole," is what motivates a servant-leader (Greenleaf 1977, 50).

Forgiveness-asking was redemptive and restorative for me, my dad, and my Jesuit companion. I observed profound interior changes in my relationship with dad and with Maher. We began to see ourselves in a new light. One key to forgiveness-asking is recognition of my shadows. The search for light and amendment gave me the impetus to overcome my inertia of protracted procrastination and excuses, especially in the case with my dad. Understanding the past, engaging the future, and recognizing blind spots are paramount in developing foresight (Spears and Lawrence 2004, 152). Forgiveness-asking is not something we leave to chance, luck or fate. Ferch says that Carl Jung believes that the denial of our shadows is a human weakness that makes us project blame on others away from ourselves and thereby undercut the opportunity for self-growth. Blaming leads us to mediocrity (Ferch 2012, 76). This weakness can be overcome through insight/knowledge and goodwill/love (ibid.). I believe forgiveness-asking is inspired by insight and goodwill. Bernard Tyrell wrote: "Man is made to know and to love" (Tyrell 1999, 136). Knowing is cognitive self-transcendence, while loving is self-transcendence and entrance into communion with the other (ibid.). It is in the self-transcendence of love that we discover ourselves and

realize our true identities (ibid.). This resonates with my experiences and also fits into the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which I will discuss later.

There is also a form of discernment involved in forgiveness-asking. Reflecting on my experiences, I discerned to know whether I was right in my stances. Sometimes the false feeling of righteousness blocks the move for forgiveness-asking. Saint Ignatius of Loyola in his second rule for the discernment of spirits (Week I) says that it is characteristic of the evil spirit to cause anxiety, discouragement, and obstacles for those who are progressing from good to better (*Spiritual Exercises* # 315). However, the good spirit stirs up courage, strength, consolations, tranquility, and inspirations that move a person toward good (ibid.). I noticed this oscillation effect in my discernment to decide on forgiveness-asking. I also learned from my reflection that it is important to keep in mind the fifth rule for discernment. After resolving to move toward forgiveness-asking, one should avoid the temptation to make a change in resolve in time of desolation.

Saint Ignatius also warns that the evil angel can appear as an angel of light (*Spiritual Exercises* # 332). Metaphorically, my shadows in a relationship might appear as light, and consequently lead to pride and make me wait for the other to ask for forgiveness instead of me making the move. I believe that prayer is important for the ritual of forgiveness-asking. It is also important to use our contemplative imagination to prepare ourselves for the forgiveness-asking ritual. Prayer to have the heart and mind of a servant-leader and prayer to say the right words are essential to transform conflict into an opportunity for new life. I am reminded of how Tutu and his TRC committee members had a prayerful interfaith service at the town where their first hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee was to take place (Tutu 1997, 112).

Forgiveness-asking also restores trust and dignity in our relationships. The truth sets one free (John 8:32); and forgiveness-asking is a confession based on truth. The experience of forgiveness-asking is like designing and building a bridge that connects the heart to the mind. Raymond Reyes (2004) said that if a person's heart is not connected to his or her mind, the person will hurt others (*Mentor Gallery, DPLS 708*). In addition, if we do not have freedom from seeking retaliation and freedom to ask forgiveness, then we need to pray for that freedom. "I am sorry," or "Will you forgive me?" is difficult to say across cultures (Tutu 1997, 269). It requires freedom and humility. Ferch believes that the servant-leader is a person of persuasion and not coercion (Ferch 2012, 147). He further added: "A rich sense of persuasion in everyday life can change the world" (ibid., 148).

In my experience, the words "I am sorry" or "Please forgive me" have a powerful-persuasive force that leads the other to offer forgiveness. After all, we do not force another person to forgive; we beg him or her to forgive. Forgiveness-asking also requires dialogue rooted in love and not coercion. Freire points out that love is the foundation for true dialogue (Freire 1993, 89). The logical consequence of dialogue that is based on a horizontal relationship of love and humility is a climate of mutual trust (ibid., 91). For me, it is this mutual trust that engages souls to transcend the past nights of discord and see a rising flame of harmony on the horizon. I also think that the quest for forgiveness is easier if one's consciousness is at the above-the-line level of thinking. For Vàclav Havel (leader of the Velvet Revolution), consciousness foreshadows being; and reflective consciousness and the human heart are seedbeds for human liberation (Ferch 2012, 115; Palmer 2000, 75–76). The pathway to reconciliation and freedom is through the practice of consciousness. Ferch said, "Servant-leadership echoes Havel's refreshing sense of the sacred with regard to consciousness and being" (Ferch 2012, 123). Those whose level of consciousness is above-the-line thinking are servant-leaders (ibid., 129). They motivate others through love, discernment, peace, forgiveness, humility, self-responsibility, and service to others (ibid., 126).

Forgiveness-asking is also a redemptive and life giving experience to me. But it takes interior self-knowledge, self-introspection, self-awareness, and self-evaluation for one to see the need for redemption and to embrace the possibility of redemption. Furthermore, forgiveness-asking is a phenomenon that takes place in the spirit and philosophy of *Ubuntu.*In this spirit, each person's existence and humanity becomes meaningful through the eyes of another (Ferch 2012, 102; Tutu 1997, 31). I resonate with the power and meaning of the words in the title of Tutu's (1997) book: *No Future without Forgiveness*; and I equally believe that a good future is founded on restorative justice. For our lives to flourish and become meaningful, the spirit of forgiveness must live in our hearts. Forgiveness-asking is an act of love, and overcoming the inertia that prevents us from extending love to others can be challenging. Loving the other is a disposition that demands from us vulnerability, humility, and surrender (Ferch 2012, 45).

Ferch sees a progression into the realm of forgiveness (Ferch 2012, 46). When we think of forgiveness, we resist the idea. When this resistance is broken, we have a desire to forgive someone. But the real revolution comes when we pass this stage and begin to "affirm the *need to ask for forgiveness*" (ibid.). At this stage, we are ready to swallow our pride and walk toward

others to ask for forgiveness, leading to change and healing in ourselves and in the other person. In my experience of forgiveness-asking, I went through these phases, albeit uniquely for each scenario. If we cannot ask for forgiveness, we will find it difficult to forgive others. We really have nothing to lose by asking forgiveness. Rather, we have enlightenment and transformation to gain. Being able to see our shadows can drive us to seek forgiveness. My experience of conflicts (no matter how small) is an experience of darkness. Forgiveness-asking helps me to throw light into my life. Just as a servant-leader first desires to serve, I also think that he or she must also first desire to ask forgiveness instead of waiting for the other to ask forgiveness first.

Remembering, mulling over, and sharing my experiences of Forgiveness-asking are like what Palmer describes as an "inner work" (Palmer 2000, 91). Reflection, journaling, meditation, spiritual friendship, and prayer are forms of inner work (ibid.). Exploring my shadows and my interior life is also a good preparation for better followership or leadership at family, communal, and organizational settings. Palmer testified that the experience of telling the truth about dark experiences helped him stay in the light (ibid., 18). I also think that the experience of articulating the truth of our failures and our Forgiveness-asking encounters strengthens us to stay in the light. Palmer sees authentic leaders as those who lead from within (ibid., 73–76). In a similar vein, I think Forgiveness-asking makes leaders able to lead more authentically from the power of their inner life and from their depth of mind and heart. Emotional and social sacrifice pilots leaders to ask forgiveness and to forgive others, thereby bestowing moral authority on leaders (Covey 2001).

Reflecting on my Forgiveness-asking experiences, I think there was depth of listening involved. I listened to my conscience, listened again to what transpired, and reconsidered what the other was saying or feeling. This then created an interior instability that needed resolution through Forgiveness-asking. I experienced a restoration of order and harmony in my relationship with my dad and Maher. An implication of this insight, for me, is that a servant-leader, who is characteristically a good listener, has an advantageous disposition to easily ask forgiveness of others. By listening to the disharmony in his or her heart, the servant-leader seeks to restore relational tranquility; and this restoration establishes deeper meaning in the organizational life that he or she is involved in. Consequently, I am challenged to develop better listening skills and to aspire for qualities of a servant-leader.

Victor Frankl said that the fundamental driving force in us is the will-to-meaning: "Therefore man is originally characterized by his 'search for

meaning' rather than his 'search for himself'" (Frankl 2000, 84). He also thinks that the more we forget ourselves and give ourselves to a cause or another person, the more human we become (ibid.). My own experience of Forgiveness-asking is that it changed my humanity positively, as well as the humanity of the other, and established a deeper meaning in my relationship with others. There was also transformation in the dynamics of relationship. I could no longer take the gift of relationship for granted. Another benefit of Forgiveness-asking is that it breaks down walls and builds bridges across our common humanity. When I was reflecting on my experiences of Forgiveness-asking, I noticed that the experience of reconciliation went beyond saying, "I am sorry" (as is indicated by my stories above). Ongoing transformations linger after forgiveness-asking. This confirms for me what Tutu meant in saying that reconciliation is an ongoing process (Tutu 1997, 274). It is also insightful to know that the work of reconciliation is God's dream for humanity (ibid.). Therefore, in forgiveness-asking, I am participating in God's dream.

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