

## Lent Is a Time of Forgiveness

This is a true story about a tragedy, a father and his daughter. Maybe it will strike a cord with you. Read on for the lesson this father has for you and me.

She hadn't meant to start it. She knew she wasn't supposed to be up in her brother's room, but she certainly didn't set out to start this fire. Still, I was seething with anger. I knew I had to say and do the right things, or my daughter would be scarred for life. I prayed for control and wisdom. My wife was in tears, "Don, what are we going to do?" she pleaded. "We could lose everything!" All I could do was to keep holding her tight, and wait. I had no answers for her. "Where is Emily? I asked, "I need to talk to her." Katie looked up at me, "She's next door, crying her eyes out. I think she's afraid we're going to kill her, she's real upset." I had arrived home just ahead of the first fire truck that Sunday evening, Katie had met me at the driveway, announcing that our house was on fire, Running to the back door, I saw the lights in the house flicker, then die, just as I reached for the door knob, I felt like I was a guest star in someone else's nightmare. This couldn't really be happening. But the five fire trucks around the house told the sobering truth. This was all too real. "I am mad enough to kill her," I said. "But I know we have to let her know we won't. We've got to make sure she knows we still love her. I'm going to go find her." I walked over to the neighbor's yard. Gregg came over and put his arm on my shoulder, asking if there was anything he could do to help. He knew as well as I did that there was nothing he could do except ask. "Your daughter's pretty shaken," he said. "She's up in Lisa's room looking out the window at your house and sobbing." "Yeah, I know. She's probably scared to death. I just need to talk to her and tell her it's going to be all right. Would you mind?" "I'll go get her," he said. I looked up at the flames coming through the roof of our house, our home. Falling on my knees, I gave it all to God. "Lord, if you will just give me the words to say to Emily, You can forget the house. Thank You for sparing my family from the fire. Please give me the way to spare my daughter from me." I felt a light tap on my shoulder. "Dad? Are you okay?" I turned and looked at Emily. Her face was caked with dried tears, and wet with new ones. "Daddy, I didn't mean ... I'm so sorry!" She began to sob uncontrollably. "Please don't hate me!" Picking up her nine-year-old body, I embraced her and kissed her and cried. All of my anger was gone. At that moment, the importance of forgiveness was seared into my soul forever.

In the Lord's Prayer, we beg the Father to forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us. When we forgive in this way, we are truly walking the Lenten Journey to Easter, and at those moments we know Divine Mercy and you will personally know that.....

YOU ARE LOVED,

Deacon Dan

"John W. Schlatter  
"Chicken Soup for the Soul"