

Prayer from the Pews

March 31, 2019

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Forgive us

Forgiveness for a child

Black and white and simple

Break a lamp, talk back, eat too much candy

Sit on a chair, go to your room, no TV

Then a kiss and a hug

Parents a stand- in deity

The sticky black tar of sin won't stick to a child

On the other side of sin is forgiveness

Forgive us

Forgiveness for a teen

Rows of black and brown children

Encased in a thick coating

Of race and poverty and denied mortgages and school suspensions and fear and rage

And fear of their rage becoming a locked cell

The judge a stand-in deity

On the other side of judgement is forgiveness

Forgive us

Forgiveness for an adult

The hardest person to forgive is herself, ossified in shades of gray

Never understanding that she was forgiven before the sin was committed

God, etched on her heart, cannot be erased by actions

A human a stand in deity

On the other side of self-recrimination is forgiveness

Forgive us

Forgiveness for an Ancestor

An earth encased in dark smoke, rivers running red with dye, muddy fields devoid of trees

Able to ignore the possibility of error and permanent loss

Believing that what was given could not be destroyed

Progress a stand -in deity

On the other side of greed is forgiveness

Forgive us

Forgiveness for all time

A human, frail and alone, and hung on cross

Tortured, yes, but not unique

Many people die from torture

And he had a temper,

He ravaged a temple, snapped at disciples, was impatient with Pharisees

He wasn't just a lamb

He wasn't just a God

His cross beam left dusty drag marks on the way to his hill

And we forget how angry his humiliation made him, how un-resigned he was the night before

How he refused to give them the satisfaction of an answer

How his forgiveness came from a beating human heart

No stand-in was needed for this deity

On the other side of forgetting is forgiveness

On the other side of forgiveness is hope

Give us hope.