



# 'FORGIVENESS'

16 - 22 Mar

Week 4 – Supplementary Resources

## Additional reading:

Poem: <b>"Call me by my true names"</b> – Thich Nhat Hanh	<b>2</b>
Article: <b>Jo Berry – 'at peace with the man who murdered my father'</b>	<b>3 - 5</b>



## 'FORGIVENESS'

16 - 22 Mar

### Week 4 – Supplementary Resources

*'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us'*

**From Janet:** **Thich Nhat Hanh's poem 'Call me by my true names'** says it all about forgiveness for me. **Once I know my true name - and yours - forgiveness is as natural as breathing.**

Don't say that I will depart tomorrow --  
even today I am still arriving.

Look deeply: every second I am arriving  
to be a bud on a Spring branch,  
to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings,  
learning to sing in my new nest,  
to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower,  
to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry,  
to fear and to hope.

The rhythm of my heart is the birth and  
death  
of all that is alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing  
on the surface of the river.  
And I am the bird  
that swoops down to swallow the mayfly.

I am the frog swimming happily  
in the clear water of a pond.  
And I am the grass-snake  
that silently feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and  
bones,  
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks.  
And I am the arms merchant,

selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl,  
refugee on a small boat,  
who throws herself into the ocean  
after being raped by a sea pirate.  
And I am the pirate,  
my heart not yet capable  
of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo,  
with plenty of power in my hands.  
And I am the man who has to pay  
his "debt of blood" to my people  
dying slowly in a forced-labour camp.

My joy is like Spring, so warm  
it makes flowers bloom all over the Earth.  
My pain is like a river of tears,  
so vast it fills the four oceans.

**Please call me by my true names,**  
so I can hear all my cries and my laughter  
at once,  
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

**Please call me by my true names,**  
so I can wake up,  
and so the door of my heart  
can be left open,  
the door of compassion.



## The Brighton Bomb:

### Jo Berry – 'at peace with the man who murdered my father'

*From Jo R: At the Greenbelt festival a few years ago, I signed up for a seminar where Jo Berry was speaking about **the work she now does in partnership with the former IRA bomber who murdered her father**. I have never forgotten her matter-of-fact approach to the unstoppable work of forgiveness.*

---

*Article and photo first printed in 'The Telegraph', October 2009 - abridged*

### **Sir Anthony Berry was killed by the Brighton bomb in October 1985. Here, his daughter Jo Berry reveals how she came to meet his killer**



Photo: LORNE CAMPBELL

"MY first impression of him was that he was very polite, very quietly spoken, small, with a beard and glasses. He didn't conform to my idea of what a terrorist should look like at all. He seemed almost academic."

Jo Berry's memory of coming face to face with Patrick Magee, the Provisional IRA bomber who killed her father, Sir Anthony Berry, is delivered in a low, trance-like voice as though she is back, apprehensive and amazed, in the secret location near Dublin where they met nine years ago.

She'd repeatedly been told that Magee didn't want to meet her: he wasn't interested in being understood by the middle-class daughter of a Tory toff. Then, one day when she was in the middle of making vegetable soup, there was a call from a go-between with instructions for a rendez-vous. She took the ferry to Ireland and launched into a strange, unorthodox friendship.

Sir Anthony, MP for Southgate, was one of the five people who died when the Grand Hotel, Brighton, was ripped apart on October 12, 1984, the last day of the Conservative Party conference. He was 59 and had six children. Magee, who had planted the bomb behind the bath panel in Room 629 three weeks earlier, was convicted of murder and sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment. But his co-criminals in the plot to wipe out Margaret Thatcher and most of her Cabinet were never traced. With no warning to the victims' relatives, Magee was released under the Good Friday Agreement in 1999, after 14 years.



## 'FORGIVENESS'

16 - 22 Mar

### Week 4 – Supplementary Resources

Jo, 52, says she knew early on that if she was going to overcome bitterness it might mean confronting the bomber. She started to make regular trips to Ireland to try to understand the conflict from both sides – without telling family or friends. Meeting Magee seemed the logical, if extreme, extension of her need to make sense of it.

"It was much more than me and my father. I felt I was part of a war." As the 25th anniversary of the bomb approaches, the permanency of the bond forged between victim and bomber is its unlikeliest legacy.

**"My expectation on that day," she says, "was that he would explain his political position – which I was used to hearing – and I would talk about what it meant to lose my wonderful father. And that would be that. There would be no point in meeting again. It couldn't go anywhere. Once would have been enough."**

**But it wasn't. They spent three highly-charged hours together. "After an hour and a half, he stopped talking," she recalls. "There was a moment of silence. He took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. 'I don't know who I am any more', he said. 'I don't know what to say. I've never met anyone like you, with so much dignity. What can I do to help? I want to hear your anger. I want to hear your pain.'**

**"His face got softer. At that point, I wanted to run. It was so much more than I'd bargained for. I didn't know where it would take me. A voice inside me was saying: you should not be talking to the man who**

**killed your father. It's wrong, wrong, wrong. There was a feeling of betrayal. But part of me wanted this to make a difference.** It seemed to be positive. I stayed. As soon as I got home, I wanted to go back for more. It was part of my healing to hear his story and reach an understanding of why he chose violence."

Nine years on, a partnership that at first seemed to be driven by mutual need and fascination has evolved into something wider. They appear at reconciliation workshops together and give talks in prisons, universities and peace conferences. They text and phone regularly. Her mobile rings while we are talking. "It's Pat." She tells me he won't agree to be interviewed but passes on questions.

Magee, who completed two university degrees in prison, has always stuck to the line that Sir Anthony Berry and the other victims were seen as legitimate targets. How does he feel today? **"Meeting Jo has helped me remove blinkers, see the bigger picture and understand that there are human beings on all sides,"** he emailed the other day.

Does he have any regrets about what he did? "I live knowing I have hurt people. I regret this, and I have to live with it every day. Meeting Jo is enabling something good to come out of this. If you have hurt someone on a personal level it's about repairing the harm – or trying to, at least. It might also, at some level, encourage others to meet with people they have great difficulty dealing with."



## Week 4 – Supplementary Resources

This falls some way short of a recantation, but Jo sounds satisfied. "Pat now realises that he was guilty of demonising the Tory party," she says, "but now he sees my Dad as a man of great humanity. That, for me, is progress. Not because it changes anything but because it **challenges the idea of 'the enemy'. The enemy just doesn't exist. The enemy is always a real person.**"

\* \* \*

Looking back, she finds it extraordinary how little psychological help there was [at the time of her father's death]. "The pain was too much to bear so I squashed it down," she says. "Quite well, I thought. Then a few weeks later, I couldn't function. Scary things like not knowing how to walk down the road; really losing it."

In the confusion and shock of Magee's release, she went to a reconciliation centre in the Wicklow mountains and met other victims of terrorism. "The moment I walked into the room, I knew it was safe. No one was going to say: 'Haven't you let go yet?' It became my world." The contacts she made there helped set up the meeting with Patrick Magee.

Berry is well aware of some victims' distaste for her rapprochement with Magee. "There are different paths for different people," she says. "I am not advocating that everyone should go down this route."

Jo Berry admits there are, and probably always will be, "difficult areas" between herself and Magee. "There are times when he says he regrets the results of his actions.

Another part of him sees violence as part of a strategy that worked; he is cut off from the results. For me, violence is never justified."

**The word forgiveness can be misleading, she explains, because it suggests an absence of anger – and there are times when she still feels angry. Forgiveness, as she sees it, is not a neat once-and-for-all emotion but something that is constantly being put to the test. "I prefer to say I can understand."**

Does she regard Magee as a friend? "A very unusual friend. I think his actions, what he did, were evil, but not the person. You have to separate them to avoid blame, and find a new way of thinking that will break that cycle of violence."

*Jo Berry's charity, Building Bridges for Peace, is at [buildingbridgesforpeace.org](http://buildingbridgesforpeace.org)*