

A story of forgiveness

Michael and Jill Seward

On a Sunday lunchtime in 1986, a family sat down to eat. It was normal day in the life of the Rev Michael Seward. As they enjoyed their lunch, burglars broke in to the vicarage. They beat Michael, his wife, his daughter and her boyfriend. Tied them up in order to steal from the vicarage and church. They also raped Michael's daughter Jill. It was a horrendous crime that made national news.

The day after it took place Michael spoke to the press from his hospital bed.

He said that he had forgiven the men who had abused him and his family. He said that he had been saying the Lord's Prayer since he was a child, and he believed it. When he recalled the line "as we forgive those who sin against us" it made him realise he had to forgive. Jesus had forgiven him his sins; he was compelled to forgive others. He did however, demand that the full force of the law be brought on the perpetrators. Justice needed to be done.

His daughter Jill, who was raped also forgave the rapists. She believed that if she were to live a fulfilled life beyond these events she had to forgive them.

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Natasha and Nadim Ednan-Laperouse

In 2016 a young Christian girl, Natasha Ednan-Laperouse was looking forward to a holiday in Nice with her dad and her best friend. At Heathrow she bought a baguette from Pret a manger and ate it.

Once on board the plane she became ill, collapsed and died in the aisle of the plane. As she died her dad, who was helpless to help his daughter saw what appeared to be angels surrounding her. He was not a believer like his daughter.

It turned out that the baguette had been mislabelled and an allergen (sesame seed) had been left off the label. Natasha was allergic to sesame seeds.

The coroner found the company Pret a Manger responsible for her death.

Shortly after the death of Natasha, the family began to attend church and became Christians.

One day, a few years later after a law was passed enforcing correct labelling on food. Nadim, Natasha's father met the CEO of Pret a Manger at a conference.

He went up to him, placed one hand on his shoulder and another over the CEO's heart and said: " I forgive you for the death of my daughter, to set you free to be the best father you can to your daughters." The CEO broke down and cried. He had been carrying the guilt of Natasha's death with him. He felt a flood of release as he wept. Nadim went on to say, that none of us set out to hurt others, but sometimes tragedy happens. We all need forgiveness.