

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

(Luke 6:27-38)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

This gospel contains the most challenging of all Christian commandments, as well as probably the most difficult commandment to keep: love your enemies and do good to those who hurt you.

EXPLORING THE WORD

In last week's gospel, the disciples learned that they must be committed to a new order if they are to be faithful followers of Jesus. This week's text reveals how they must live in that new order; in a sense, it provides the practical details of being a follower. What Jesus is suggesting should not be confused with passivity, inaction or resignation in the face of persecution and injustice. On the contrary! Jesus is suggesting radical action: that we believers act towards others without being asked, and that we offer friendship and pardon constantly, without asking or hoping for anything in return. In Jesus, we find God's self-revelation, his actions in and for the world, and his plan for salvation and its fulfilment. Followers of Jesus must act in these ways precisely because they are the ways of God.

- Turn the other cheek, love your enemies and do good to those who hurt you. Why should we? How can we? How challenging do you find this directive?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Which part of this text challenges you the most?
- In what ways have you experienced God's compassion?
- Respond practically to one of Jesus' commands in this gospel—such as by praying for those who treat you badly, showing compassion to someone or forgiving someone who has wronged you.
- Describe an experience of being hurt, criticised, misjudged or wronged in some way. How did you feel and how did your feelings affect your response to the situation?
- Repeat this line from the Lord's Prayer often this week and act on it:

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God’s word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

This text—along with the fifth commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill’—offers clear guidance to the Church in relation to acts of violence and war. And yet, shamefully, we can all point to some terrible events in history in which the Church seems to have disregarded such guidance.

- You could highlight some public apologies that the Church has made recently for past wrongs—such as Pope John Paul II’s apology during the Jubilee Year in 2000 for the Crusades and the Inquisition. More recent examples are apologies for situations of injustice or abuse within the Church itself, or apologies for cooperating with the removal of Indigenous children from their families.

Crucially, we must recognise that sometimes the Church—a divine institution that is also limited by human frailty in its actions and historical circumstances—must seek to redress any situations of injustice or hurt in order to move forward in a way that aligns more closely with God’s plan for the world.

- You could explore how the Church is attempting to redress past wrongs and thus provide a better witness to the demands of the Gospel—such as by promoting religious dialogue with Islam and Judaism, or by accepting responsibility for clerical abuse.
- Ensure that you relate the discussion of this teaching back to the personal level, in terms of how Christians should live their daily lives.

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

This text immediately follows the Beatitudes of last week’s gospel, and it continues the theme of radical reversal that the Gospel calls for. What the world might consider simply human nature or a natural response is not the way of Jesus’ disciples, who follow a different world order. Followers of Jesus must act and respond in a certain way because that is the way of God!

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- What activity does your community offer to promote harmony, tolerance and understanding in your local area or more broadly?
- Use the open Scriptures and a candle as a focus. Pray for all people who are engaged in promoting peace and harmony locally, nationally and globally. Pray for each other as you are about to enter the final stage of your journey. A suitable song could be For the Healing of the Nations (GA 513). Conclude with the prayer of blessing in the RCIA at §97D.

NOTES

Dotted lines for note-taking.