

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time Sunday, February 19, 2023

First Reading: Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

Psalms # 103 R: The Lord is merciful and gracious

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Gospel Acclamation Verse: Whoever obeys the word of Christ, grows perfect in the love of God.

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

Theme: Four ways to follow Jesus and grow perfect in the love of God

Commentary:

Do you find it easy to forgive the mistakes that others make? Is it easy to be kind and thoughtful to those who are selfish and mean to you? Is it easy to share your favourite game, toy or fashion accessory? Do you find it hard to be nice to those who don't like you?

In Matthew's Gospel today, Jesus teaches four ways that he wants us to act so we can grow perfect in the love of God. He explains what it means to 'love our neighbour as ourselves'. When we try to follow even one of these, we have a very good day. They show others that even though we may not agree with what they say or do, we see them as loved children of God, as our brothers and sisters. We become the hands, feet and voices of Jesus today.

The first way is to turn the other cheek. Wait, What? Yup, that's what Jesus asks us, and Jesus knows how hard this is because this is how he lived. So if someone hurts us, we are to respond in a loving way, not with violence. He wants us to respond with kindness, gentleness and compassion.

The second way is to be generous when others ask you for things. Not only this but to give them more than they asked for. This is God's way. An example of this might be a classmate who you notice is without a lunch and shivering. You offer a part of your lunch and an extra sweater you had not yet brought home. They did not actually ask, but you saw a need. This is a holy moment. God is pleased. You took notice of someone else's need and you did something about it. Maybe others noticed as well and might do the same for another.

The third way is to pray for those who are cruel to you. Or what about that person who knows exactly how to get you upset, every time? Write down their name and pray for them by name. Ask Jesus to bless them and their day. Or maybe for one day, anytime someone says something or does something that frustrates you, pray for them, by name. Ask Jesus to bless them. Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who nailed him to the cross. We can forgive those who injure us too.

The last way is to love those who do not love you. Wow. Is there someone who drives you nuts? Not that they are a terrible person, just that your personalities go against each other like a nail on a chalkboard. Be over the top generous to this person for one full day and watch how the day gets better.

How did our world get in the mess it is in? We are in this mess because we have turned our backs on the teachings of Jesus. We got this way by unholy moments every day. But there is hope. We can change things, one holy moment at a time. One small act of forgiveness or kindness can indirectly affect the lives of many. The waves of love and friendship that result from a special holy moment of forgiveness encourages others to do the same. We can choose to say yes to working with Jesus by following even one of his teachings from today's gospel.

Prayer for Families: Heavenly Father, help us to forgive the unforgiving, to love our enemies, and to deepen our friendship with you and one another. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. AMEN

Family Activities, Lent, Colouring Page, Cross Word Puzzle and Word Search: Pages 2-6

Resources used for this post: Holy Heroes, Living With Christ, Dynamic Catholic, Sermons4Kids, Katie Thompson

LENT - 40 Days of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving

Lent begins this week on Ash Wednesday, February 22, 2023. Come to Holy Cross to receive your ashes at one of our Ash Wednesday masses: 12:15pm. or 7:00pm

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence. During Lent, we are challenged by the Church to practice three 'pillars': Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving.

FASTING:

Fasting and abstinence isn't a punishment for sin. Rather, it's meant to help us practice our self control, and remind us to pray and put God before our own desires. We don't fast and abstain because food is bad; rather, it's because it's so good that we voluntarily give it up for a day! It also brings to our hearts those who are starving. For most of us, this is not a reality we have personally faced. By experiencing even a small taste of their hunger, we are reminded to pray for them and to give generously of our own blessings to those in need.

What is fasting and abstinence?

Fasting means limiting what you eat and drink to one regular meal and two smaller meals (that together do not equal the regular meal in size). In the spirit of this, we typically also avoid any sweets or treats, like dessert or alcohol, and don't snack between meals. Abstinence means to cut out particular food items or drinks, specifically meat. While all Fridays are meant to be days of abstinence, in Canada the Canada Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) has decreed that Catholics can substitute special acts of charity or piety on this day.

Who has to fast and abstain?

If you are 14 or older, you must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. If you are between the ages of 18 and 59, you must also fast on those days.

What if I have a medical condition?

Not everyone can fast in the same way! Some people have medical conditions that make fasting dangerous. If this is the case, look for another way to fulfill the spirit of fasting while still taking care of your body. You could fast from desserts or rich food and drink, or eat simple meals that day.

Prayer	Fasting	Almsgiving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) and experience the beautiful mercy of God! Saturday 4:15-4:45pm Lenten service to be announced soon • Stations of the Cross: Friday: Feb 24 - March 31 - 7:00pm and Good Friday, April 7, 7:30pm • Adoration First Friday of the month: 11:30am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above for information • Visit: Ascension Presents and Fr. Mike Schmitz YouTube podcasts on why we fast + give alms for Lent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donate to local food banks • Donate to local missions • Donate to relief funds such as Development & Peace, CNEWA, or Chalice • Donate to your parish

Discussion Starters and Family Activities Based on Matthew 5:38-48

Discussion starters: (Choose one or more of these after reading today's scripture readings)

1. Do you find it easy to forgive the mistakes others make?
2. Do you think Jesus understands our struggle to be forgiving?
3. How do you feel when you are forgiven for a mistake you have made?
4. Why happens if people or nations are unforgiving towards each other?

PIN CROSS ON HEART: The children take turns being blindfolded and turned around and around and then pin or tape a cut-out cross to a giant heart on the wall. A variation to the game might be to have the children try to tape a small heart with their name on it to a large cross on the wall, so that when the game is over, there will be many hearts on the cross. Then PRAY together as a family for all of your enemies to see JESUS in their HEART and to LOVE them as Jesus wants us to love them.

HEART BOOK MARKERS: Provide various coloured heart cut-outs to glue to a book mark shape that they will decorate and write LOVE MY ENEMIES, or to write today's Bible verse on the marker.

LOVE CHART: This activity can be done on a large sheet of poster board or as a chalkboard activity. Let each child draw a heart and write a reason inside the drawn heart that they should love others. This can lead to a family discussion of why and how to love others, as well as problems that children might face in dealing with an "enemy".

BUBBLES EVERYWHERE: Blow soap bubbles everywhere around the room and allow the children to pop as many bubbles as they can. After doing this for a short time, the parent will stop and tell the children that the next time the she/he blows soap bubbles, they aren't allowed to touch or pop any bubbles, they can only watch as the bubbles float around them. This is practice in learning to exercise self control and show LOVE to all those around them.

PRAYER HANDS: Each person has a piece of construction paper to fold in half from top to bottom. They will place one hand on the paper with their wrist at the FOLD of the paper. They will then trace around their hand and cut out that tracing. That will create folded "prayer hands." Inside the hands, the children will draw a heart on the palm and write LOVE ONE ANOTHER or something similar of their choice. Words from today's Bible verse may be written in bright markers on each finger.

RIPPLES OF LIVE AND FORGIVENESS: In a shallow dish, add a layer of sand and fill with water. Have small pebbles, stones or beads available. With quiet music playing, invite the family to think about forgiveness. Is there someone that needs to be forgiven? Is there someone in their lives who showed forgiveness? Help them consider the parts of the world where forgiveness and friendship between 'enemies' is greatly needed for peace to return to their lands. Each member then takes a turn at gently dropping a pebble into the dish of water. As they watch the ripples of this action, help them to see how gestures of love and forgiveness they show family, friends, and neighbours, will extend to others, spreading out to make our world a better place for all to live. Kindness, forgiveness, thoughtfulness are all holy moments that give life to others, encourages others to do the same, and is what Jesus asks of us as his disciples.

COLOURING PAGE
Based on Matthew 5:38-48



WORD PUZZLE
Based on Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus came to teach the people a new law about love

use the code to find his words from Matthew 5:44

SECRET CODE PAD

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

 12 15 22 5 25 15 21 18

 5. 14 5 13 9 5 19 N _____
 1 14 4

 16 18 1 25 6 15 18 20 8 5 13

ANSWER:
 Love your enemies and pray for them

WORD SEARCH
Based on Matthew 5:38-48

R U H F A L O V E B N S B K R
Z Y X R B G T E L O R U R V F
Q G N I V I G E I V G S S T J
Y R R E V B S S M B I E U Q J
F S V N G S S D B P M J O J U
J E E D E A H K L F L G I E P
Y H D S P W I S D O M E C R M
G X F M O A D V F W Z W A F Y
E Y O S T M Y D Y O O Y R K P
N C C U D C O V L X R R G N X
E R E R N G E K O G D G L D Q
R H E Y E C I F H N K D I D W
O D Y U G M Z T R D L E Y V Z
U S C T S A F D A E T S V S E
S E T T P D I S C I P L E S T

BLESS	COMPASSION	DISCIPLES	FORGIVE	FRIENDS
GENEROUS	GIVING	GOD	GRACIOUS	HOLY
JESUS	LOVE	MERCY	MOSES	PERFECT
PRAY	STEADFAST	TEMPLE	WISDOM	WORLD