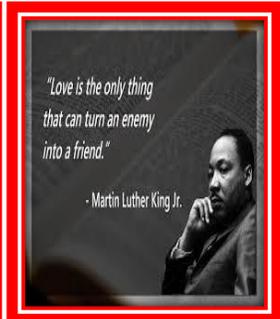
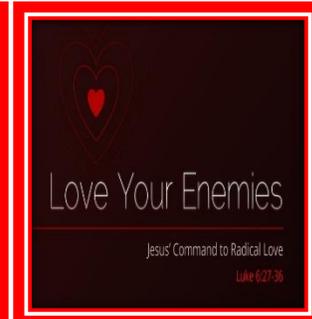


September 10, 2020 – Thursday of the 23rd Week in Ordinary Time



**“Allowing the Crucified Lord to be our model, our inspiration and our strength in our desire to live the ‘Gospel of the Tough!’”
(1 Cor 8:1-7, 11-13 and Lk 6:27-38)**

The Gospel Reading of the Day is “A Gospel of the Tough”. And this Gospel of the Tough has probably one of the toughest sentences of the Gospels enshrined in it: "Love your enemies..." (Lk 6:27).

Many of us may feel that this statement is just way too ideal to be feasible and doable. But well Facts remain facts... we like it or not... we accept it or not. And this fact that Jesus really meant to “Love your enemies...” is proved by what follows after this statement: He gives some explanations for the same: (Lk 6:27-28):

- Do good to those who hate you.
- Bless those who curse you.
- Pray for those who abuse you.
- He gives some practical tips for the same: (Lk 6: 29-30)
- If someone hits you, turn the other cheek.
- If someone takes your shirt, give your jacket too.
- If someone asks you, give him something.
- If someone steals your money, do not demand it back.

This is followed by the splendid Golden Rule: Do to others what you want others to do to you! (Lk 6:31). Indeed, the teaching to “Love your enemies” is a reality and a fact and is a call to which we are invited to give heed. That leads to a very practical question: Who are my enemies? In general, an enemy is anyone who feels hatred toward, intends injury to, or opposes the interests of another. The moment we hear the word "enemy", our minds usually transport to some famous "enemies" of the world like some notorious terrorists or some dictators or rulers or gangs, etc. But the Lord is very particular in pointing out who are these “enemies”. Jesus doesn't restrict "enemies" to people who are against the state or the nation, but he especially means our personal enemies.

Who are these our personal enemies? One clue we get from the words of Jesus, in Mt 10:36, “A man's enemies will be the members of his own household”. Oops! That's

pretty close, right? Our personal enemies are not most often spread in Iraq or North Korea or Afghanistan or China etc. We may perhaps never even visit these countries or encounter the people of these nations. But our personal enemies are those in our home, those in our close circles whom we meet every day. People whom we meet regularly and whom we come in contact often are the ones whom most likely we can hurt or who hurt us and over time they become our personal enemies. So, well it's time to identify a few enemies and a few personal enemies

- Do I own a grudge against the members of my family – spouses, parents, children?
- Do I possess hatred against the members of my community – superiors, companions, juniors, mates?
- Do I kindle anger against my extended family members – siblings, in-laws, relatives?
- Do I harbor ill-feelings against those with whom I work – bosses, colleagues, junior workers?
- Do I maintain bad thoughts against the members of my church – priests, persons with duties, various associations?
- Do I keep resentment against some other known people in life – friends, acquaintances, neighbors?
- Do I entertain bitterness against many strangers – storekeepers, some walkers on the street, bus/auto/train people?

We have to admit it that the ones who are close to us and who are more familiar are the ones who are hurt or who abuse us and they turn out to be our “personal enemies”. Yet, the statement of the Lord remains firm as a rock – “Love your enemies”

So how do we love our “enemies”? Here are some practical tips and suggestions:

- **Greeting them:** Wishing them constantly at least ensures we do not avoid them or dodge away from them.
- **Spread goodness:** Answer constant avoidance with positive strokes of good deeds. Make the first move to heal.
- **Avoid evil-talk:** Stop any bad utterances and expressions to flow from the mouth. Every time we talk: either life comes or death. The tongue has power! Allow it to forgive and bring forth life.
- **Thank God for them:** God seeks the good of ALL persons...including the one who is not liked by us. Offer the person to this goodness and benevolence of God and be grateful
- **Pray for them:** We may become helpless in our situation. But through prayer, God has the great ability to gift pardon and mercy. An honest heart will surely allow God's love to flow through the relationship.
- **Ask God to Bless them:** It's hard to accept, but the enemy can be a gift from God. Like Joseph who said, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen 50:20), the enemies become a cause for us to be humble, to keep us on our knees, to reveal our weakness & to expose our total need for God.

The teaching to – “Love your enemies...” is unmistakably a “Gospel of the Tough”. St Paul exhorts and tells us: “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” (1 Cor 8:1). Let the Crucified Lord be our model, our inspiration, and our strength in our desire to live this “Gospel of the Tough”.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, Your love brings freedom and pardon. Let me receive the ability through Your Grace to treat others, not as they deserve, but with love, kindness, the spirit of forgiveness and mercy. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and set my heart free with Your merciful love that nothing may make me lose my temper, ruffle my peace, take away my joy, nor make me bitter towards anyone.

Jesus, I Trust in You