

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary time – C

Lk 6:27-38

Dear Friends.

Today we continue Luke's Sermon on the Plain. The passage could hardly be more challenging. At the beginning and near the end is the central message: love your enemies. In between is a list of particular actions that show concretely how this love may be expressed

All the examples Jesus gives demand total generosity. There is no retribution in the face of injury, insult and unreasonable demands. We are to have no claim of revenge no matter how gross the injustice.

In themselves, the actions Jesus sets out make no sense. This is the case whenever Jesus operates from the prophetic manner of speech.

There are two ways of approaching this difficult call of Jesus that totally miss the point. One is to not take the teaching seriously as if it were just impossible to do. The second is to take the teaching literally as if we must respond specifically the same way in our life.

The third approach is both doable and deeply challenging. Jesus is insisting on a fundamental attitude that is foolish in comparison to the standards of the world but is a mirror of God's attitude of unlimited mercy. This sense of direction only makes sense when seen as sharing God's attitude toward our enemies.

Jesus states this in his words: **"You will be children of the Most High, who is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked."** (Lk 6:35)

This approach of Jesus is calling us to this attitude of mercy. The specific demands are not rules of behavior. They are aimed at developing a general

approach to life that avoids judging others, that is open to forgiveness and that is generous in loving. Jesus is calling us to expand the limits of our heart so we may be the vessel of mercy and forgiveness to all and, in particular, to our enemies.

We are not able to love our enemies with the same warmth and depth of feeling we have for our loved ones. We can, however bless them and pray for them. The words of the Our Father about forgiveness tell us a truth so commonly forgotten. Our lack of forgiveness closes our heart to God's mercy for us.

No matter how our enemies may insult, mistreat or injure us, we are called to seek what is good for them even in the midst of their continuing hostility for us.

In verses 33 to 35 Jesus is asking us to go beyond the ordinary. We are called to take the extra step. The measure of our conduct is neither our culture nor the common practice of our day. The apparent nonsense of loving our enemies is only possible when we imitate our loving and merciful God. God loves the sinner and the saint. All of Jesus life and teachings are a call for us to enter into the universal love. Today Jesus gives us some very concrete attitudes that we need to take on. **“Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.”** (Lk 6:34-35)