

Thursday of the Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:27-38): Jesus said to his disciples: “To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount.

But rather, 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. Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

“Be merciful, just as also your Father is merciful”

Fr. Jaume AYMAR i Ragolta
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Today in the Gospel, the Lord asks us—twice—to love our enemies. Then He gives us three very concrete ways to live this command: do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. At first glance, this seems like an impossible task: how can we love those who don’t love us? Even more, how can we love those we know for certain wish us harm? To love in this way is a gift of God—but we must be open to receive it.

In fact, if we think about it carefully, loving our enemies is also the wisest course of action, humanly speaking. An enemy who is loved finds himself disarmed. Loving him may very well be the first step toward him ceasing to be an enemy. Along the same line, Jesus goes on to say: “To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well” (Lk 6:29). At first this may sound like an excess of meekness. But what did Jesus Himself do when He was struck during His Passion? He did not strike back, but He responded with such firm charity that it must have given that angry servant pause: “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” (Jn 18:23).

All religions contain a version of the so-called Golden Rule: “Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you.” But Jesus alone expresses it in the positive: “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Lk 6:31). This Golden Rule is the very foundation of all morality. Commenting on this verse, St. John Chrysostom reminds us: “There is more here, for Jesus did not simply say: ‘wish good for others,’ but rather, ‘do good for others.’” That’s why the Golden Rule given by Christ can never remain a mere wish; it must be translated into action.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“My God, how good you are! How well do you suit the trial to our strength!” (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux)

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“When one learns to blame himself he is merciful with others.” (Francis)

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“The entire Law of the Gospel is contained in the ‘new commandment’ of Jesus (Jn 13:34), to love one another as he has loved us (cf. Jn 15:12).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 1970)