

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Gospel text (Mt 5:43-48): Jesus said to his disciples, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you”

Fr. Joan COSTA i Bou
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today's Gospel exhorts us to the most perfect love. Love wants to do well to others, and here lies our personal fulfillment. We do not love for our own sake, but for the sake of doing well to our neighbor and in doing it we improve as persons. The II Vatican Council said: “man cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.” That’s what Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus meant when speaking about “making an holocaust of our life.” Love is a human vocation; our whole behavior, to be truly human, has to be the expression of the reality of our being while fulfilling our vocation for love. Saint John Paul II wrote: “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.”

Love has its foundation and reaches its highest form in God's love in Christ. We are invited to a dialogue with God. We exist for the love of God, Who created us, and for the love of God which keeps us, “for man would not exist were he not created by God's love and constantly preserved by it; and he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator”

(II Vatican Council); this is the most important reason of its dignity. In other words, human love must remain under the custody of Divine Love, which is where it comes from, where it finds its reflection and brings it to its fullest. This is why, love, when truly human, loves with God's heart and can even embrace its foe. Otherwise, one does not truly love. To such an extent that the exigency of our giving ourselves sincerely, becomes a divine precept: “So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“O my Lord, how good You are.” (Saint Teresa of Jesus)

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“Loving our enemies, those who persecute us and cause us suffering, is difficult and neither is it a “good deal” because it drains us. Yet, this is the path pointed out and taken by Jesus for our salvation.” (Francis)

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“Christ died out of love for us, while we were still enemies. The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbor of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 1825)