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 the Gospel exhorts us to the most perfect love. To love is to desire the good of the other, and this is the basis of our personal fulfilment. We do not love for the sake of our own good, but for the sake of the beloved, and in so doing we grow as persons. The Second Vatican Council affirmed that man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself." This is what St. Therese of the Child Jesus meant when she asked us to make our lives a holocaust. Love is the human vocation. All our behavior, to be truly human, must manifest the reality of our being, fulfilling the vocation to love. As 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 encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."

Love has its foundation and its fullness in the love of God in Christ. The human person is invited to dialogue with God. He exists for the love of God who created him and for the love of God who preserves him; "he cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and devotes himself to His Creator" (Second Vatican Council): this is the highest reason for his dignity. Human love must therefore be guarded by divine Love, which is its source, in which it finds its model and brings it to fullness. For these reasons, love, when it is truly human, loves with the heart of God and embraces even its enemies. If not, one does not truly love. Hence the demand for a sincere gift of self becomes a divine precept: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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

- “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)

- “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, № 1825)