Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:38-48): Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

“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.

“Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect”

Fr. José PLAZA Monárdez
(Calama, Chile)

Today, the word of God teaches us that the original source and measure of holiness are in God: “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). He inspires us and we are drawn to Him. The way is set out for us by the new law, that of Love. Love is the solid driver of our convictions, expressed so clearly in this fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew.

The old law "eye for an eye" from the book of Exodus (cf. Ex 21:23-35), that was to be the law to avoid all revenge and restrict "eye for an eye", the terror of war, is definitively superseded by the law of love. We are given, in these verses, an entire “Carta Magna” for moral belief; love of God and thy neighbor.

Emeritus Pope Benedict XIV told us, “It is only through service to others that opens my eyes as to what God does for me and to how much He loves me.” Jesus gives us a law whereby justice is infinite, whereby evil is not defeated by causing more hurt, but by expelling it entirely from our lives, thereby reducing its

hold on us.

In order to triumph, Jesus tells us, one must have a strong hold of our own interior lives and be clear by which law we live, that of unconditional love, free and magnanimous. Love led Him to the Cross, as love triumphs over hate. This is the way to victory, without violence, with humility and abundant love as God is love translated into action. If our actions are driven by this same love that will not abandon us, Our Father will recognize us as His children. This is the perfect pat, one of superabundant love that places us in the current of the kingdom, whose most loyal expression is the sublime manifestation of overflowing love that God has drenched our hearts with through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Holiness is not a luxury for the few; it is not just for some people. It is meant for you and for me and for all of us.” (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

- “Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the "Christian revolution", a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world!” (Benedict XVI)

- “... The teaching of Christ goes so far as to require the forgiveness of offenses. He extends the commandment of love, which is that of the New Law, to all enemies (Cf. Mt 5:43-44). Liberation in the spirit of the Gospel is incompatible with hatred of one's enemy as a person... (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 1933)