

## SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

*Luke 6:27-38*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I say this to you who are listening: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you, do not refuse your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from the man who robs you. Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks can you expect? For even sinners do that much. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same amount. Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.'

'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back.'

### REFLECTION 1: JESUS' GOLDEN RULE

Today's gospel sets before us the Christian standard of behaviour towards others. Let us reflect on how we fall short of it and consider how we can grow towards its call. First, we must love our enemies, being compassionate as our heavenly father is compassionate, and second we must be generous to one another by refraining from judging others, being willing to offer pardon, and sharing our riches with others.

When missionaries to Alaska first began to minister to the Eskimo people, they were surprised to discover the Inuit term for forgiveness. It was a formidable assembly of 24 letters, meaning, 'not being able to think about it anymore'. Implied in this term is the notion that the one who forgives is also the one who forgets. So often we forgive but retain the memory of the hurt done. Forgiveness is a noble gift and when it is authentically offered and genuinely received, it never ceases to stir amazement in the human heart.

There is no commandment of Jesus that has caused so much discussion and debate as the commandment to love our enemies. The word that is used in today's Gospel is the word 'agapan' a Greek word that describes an active feeling of benevolence towards other people. It means that no matter what others do to us we will always desire their highest good and that we will deliberately and of set purpose go out of our way to be good and kind of them. Obviously, we cannot love our enemies as we love our nearest and dearest, but we can see to it that no matter how others offend us, even if the insult or ill-treat us, we will still try to seek nothing but their highest good. This love towards our enemies is not only something of the heart; it is something also of the will - something that by the grace of God we will ourselves to do. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule that bids us to do to others, as we would have them do to us. That rule existed in many writers of many creeds even before the time of Jesus - but it was always in a negative form. Jesus' Golden Rule is positive. It is easy for us to remain inactive, but it is a very different thing to go out of one's way to act towards others as we would wish them to behave towards us. The very essence and heart of Christian living is that it consists not in refraining from bad things as being actively involved in doing good things. Jesus' Golden Rule in today's Gospel of doing to others, as we would have them do to us, is based on that 'extra thing'. So often people claim to be just as good as their neighbour and very likely they are. But the question of Jesus is, 'how much better are we than the ordinary person?'. It is not towards our neighbour we should be comparing ourselves, it is God with whom we must measure up; and by that comparison we all fall short. God's love embraces saint and sinner alike and it is that love we must copy so as to earn for ourselves the title 'Children of God'.

Pope John Paul II, in beatifying and canonising so many people, was saying to us that many did in fact live up to that high ideal. Most of us can think of some folk we know like that - a teacher, a relation, a friend, and at times we can be so ourselves!