

Homily for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A) February 22-23, 2020

Many of us have heard this Gospel before, and it's one of the most challenging, difficult and hard to understand passages in the entire Bible. But it's also the most fundamentally Christian words in Scripture, because it calls for each of us, to be the most like Christ. It actually calls us to be “perfect,” like Our Heavenly Father is perfect.

And look what Jesus is asking us to do: 1) Turn the other cheek, 2) Give away our coat, and the most radical of all, 3) Love our enemies, and pray for our persecutors. Let's think about that for a minute. Consider all the people who have hurt us during our lifetime. Those who have lied to us, or stabbed us in the back. Remember the ones who spread rumors about us that were untrue, or those who gossiped about us, or bullied us in school. What about those who disrespected us, or took advantage of us, or even those who abused us. Some have left bruises and scars, and not all of them were just physical or mental scars, and some are permanent.

Then today, Jesus instructs us to love them, and even to pray for them. To pray for their good, and for grace to come into their lives, because chances are, if someone has hurt us or persecuted us, it's probably because someone once did the same to them. It's a vicious cycle. And Jesus himself said to us, “Stop, enough, let it go.” He knows that we can do better. He knows we can aim higher, and be perfect, like His Heavenly Father is perfect. And it starts with something so simple, yet it seems so hard - “forgiveness!” It is by forgiveness that we can begin to heal, and to love, and begin to pray for those who have hurt us. So today, as we prepare to approach the altar to receive Communion, let's pray for the grace to love all those who have hurt us, and to forgive them, and remember to pray for those who we actually would rather forget.

And to bring in the “theme” of the Bishop's Stewardship Appeal, we need to remember the “Golden Rule”, which actually comes to mind when we read today's Gospel. “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.” That means doing good not only to those who are friends, but to those who are not, those who are suffering and in need.

Jesus wants us to imitate the goodness and generosity of God. What makes us Catholics different from any other religion in the world is the quality and the gift that He gives us, known as grace and blessings – that's God's own life working in us. So is this grace and these blessings He gives us, are they in the center of our lives? Are we willing to give back to God, for all the grace and blessings He has given to each of us? That's a question only we can answer! Please be generous in your gift back to God!