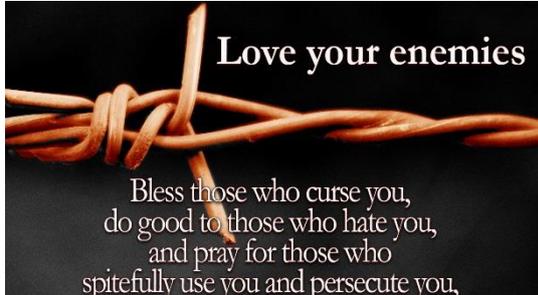


REFLECTIONS – 7<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME,  
YEAR C, 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2019



Love your enemies

Bless those who curse you,  
do good to those who hate you,  
and pray for those who  
spitefully use you and persecute you,

**GOSPEL LUKE 6:26-38**

*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 person who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the person 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.*

What is being looked for is not simply the solution to one problem, but an entire shift of worldview away from patterns of dominance toward mutually enhancing relationships.

Elizabeth Johnson CSJ, *She Who Is*

**REFLECTION** by Peter Thomas, JPIC Team

In his spirited sermon at the 2018 wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, US Bishop Michael Curry, describing love's transformative power for humanity quoted these words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "*think and imagine a world where love is the way.*"

In Luke's gospel today Jesus expects us to love not just those we like but to love our enemies. If we are looking for a nice comfy religion that doesn't make too many demands, makes us feel better when we are down and saves us a ring-side seat in heaven when we die, then maybe our religion is too comfortable!. The gospel way is demanding as Jesus has this crazy notion that we must serve others rather than ourselves, to show integrity even though no one is looking and the 'big one', the real challenge, to love our enemies.

The world says love your friends. Be loyal to your friends. Look out for your friends. But it's altogether another thing to love an enemy, someone who has your dishonour or even destruction as their goal. Jesus is asking for more than a smile he wants us to practice reconciliation, forgiveness and for heaven's sake, love!

American Jesuit James Martin tells a joke about a priest giving a homily based on Jesus command to love your enemies. He asks his congregation to raise their hands if they have many enemies. And quite a few people raise their hands. "Now raise your hands if you have only a few enemies." And about half as many people raise their hands. "Now raise your hands if you have only one or two enemies." And even fewer people raise their hands. "See," said the priest, "most of us feel like we have enemies." "Now raise your hands if you have no enemies."

In the very back of the church a very old man raises his hand. Delighted the priest invites the man to the front of the church. "What a blessing," says the priest, "how old are you?" "I'm 98 and I have no enemies," says the old man. "What a wonderful Christian example you are," says the priest. "Tell us how it is that you have gone through life and reached the grand old age of 98 and have no enemies?" The man looked intently at the priest and then the congregation and said, "It's simple, all my enemies have died."

In last week's gospel we saw that Jesus warned us that when we are serving the Lord, people are going to hate us, exclude us, insult us and reject us. In other words they become our enemy. The question for us is what are we to do about that response?

In the global village, especially where we are not bothered by proximity, we often stigmatise and stereotype those who are different so much so that we perpetuate injustice. We justify inaction by exclusion. Compassion is sacrificed and we think it's enough to believe that we are doing well when we hate those who hate us. Loving people, even those who are 'enemies' means that we must go beyond mutual acceptance. Jesus is calling us to engage in something altogether more radical, for a positive action towards our enemies. That takes guts!



*In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human success, but rather on how much we have loved.*

*John of the Cross*

#### ***Pope Francis Gaudete Et Exsultate #14***

**To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.**

#### ***INTERCESSIONS***

1. For national policies where governments will promote trust over suspicion, truth over falsehood, diplomacy over war, justice over oppression, restoration over retribution, and equality over dominance, we pray: ***May we share in your compassion, O God.***
2. For a determination to confront injustice and institutions without devaluing people, we pray: ***May we share in your compassion, O God.***
3. For Plenary Council 2020 that the People of God will engage with our church leaders to offer a visionary model of an inclusive and compassionate church, we pray: ***May we share in your compassion, O God.***
4. For those we consider our enemies, those who hate or hurt us, those who have significantly different views or values, and those who simply irritate us; that we will strive to have the courage and openness to listen to them with open hearts and minds, we pray: ***May we share in your compassion, O God.***

#### ***CARMELITE TRADITION:***

On the question of relating to our fellow human beings- our neighbor's spiritual need transcends every commandment. Everything else we do is a means to an end. But love is an end already, since God is love.

*Edith Stein*

Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love.

*Therese of Lisieux*