



Bringing Home the Word

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 24, 2019

Learning to Love Our Enemy

By Paige Byrne Shortal

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you....” Oh no! This impossible gospel again! Love your enemies? Turn the other cheek? If someone takes my cloak, I don’t give him my tunic. I look for a way to get it back and sue for damages besides.

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Jesus didn’t just preach. He acted as he wants us to act and tells us, “Do as I do.” “Love one another as I have loved you,” he said. At the Last Supper after he washed his disciples’ feet, he said, “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”

But love my enemies?

Well, OK, who is my enemy? For

some it is the enemy of our nation. For others it is our current president and his administration, whoever it happens to be. For some the enemy is those who criticize the Church. For others it is the Church’s leadership. For some the enemy is a boss or former boss. For some it’s black people or white people, rich people or poor people, refugees who are trying to get into our country or citizens who are trying to keep them out. For some the enemy is as close to home as a parent who was abusive, a brother or sister, a daughter-in-law or son-in-law, an ex-spouse.

We tend to think *our* enemy is the exception; that *our* reason for hating is reasonable and not what Jesus was talking about. Find me the Gospel passage that offers the exception. I’d really like to read it and let myself off the hook.

If we have a hatred that’s gnawing at us, perhaps this points the way to our Lenten discipline. If we can’t love our enemies, we can pray for the grace to do so. If we can’t pray to love our enemies, we can pray for the desire to do so. If we can’t pray for the desire to love them, we can at least pray for the desire for the desire. Let’s start on Ash Wednesday. +

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A Word from Pope Francis

The cross of Christ bears the suffering and the sin of mankind, including our own. Jesus accepts all this with open arms, bearing on his shoulders our crosses and saying to us: “Have courage! You do not carry your cross alone! I carry it with you.”

—World Youth Day, July 26, 2013



Sunday Readings

1 Samuel 26:2, 7–9, 12–13, 22–23

The LORD repays everyone’s righteousness and faithfulness.

1 Corinthians 15:45–49

Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Luke 6:27–38

[Jesus said,] “Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I look for the good in others, including those I dislike?
- Can I pray for the grace to understand—and even love—my enemies?

Battling Addiction— Surrendering to God's Grace



By Paul M. Smith

"I don't belong here!" kept repeating in my impaired brain as I sat propped against the concrete wall. My head was pounding, my stomach churning. *"I'm the father of three, a community leader, a radio and television personality. How could this happen again?"*

The evening was a blur except for the flashing lights in my rearview mirror, prompting a familiar sinking feeling. There was no point in taking the field sobriety test. I could barely stand, much less walk a straight line. I vaguely remember verbally abusing the arresting officer and faking a heart attack in an attempt to avoid a Breathalyzer test. No one was fooled. My blood-alcohol content was well over the legal limit.

Now, sitting in the drunk tank, surrounded by a dozen men, some vomiting, others lying in their urine, I wondered:

"How could I have fallen this low again?"

I hadn't gone more than a day or two in my adult life without drinking or using drugs, usually both. I was fourteen when I took my first drink, whiskey straight from the bottle. I drank the whole thing and passed out.

As a teenager, drinking helped me fit in. It made me feel more comfortable around people. I could talk to girls. I even thought I could dance. (I now know that I can't!) Later there came two divorces, multiple arrests, the threat of losing good jobs, and the alienation of my children. My response was to simply drink and drug more. Finally, yet another humiliating arrest convinced me of my powerlessness. It was only then that the grace of God could enter me to expel my obsession for self-destructive drinking.

My conversion was gradual. I had abandoned my strict Catholic upbringing in favor of the lure of the world. Having no idea how to live on life's terms and with nothing to numb the pain, I became more miserable with each passing day. I visited recovery groups but rebelled against joining a twelve-step program. They talked of a Higher Power and, though I believed in God, I had kept him out of my life.

Then I met the man who would become my spiritual guide. A recovering alcoholic himself, this missionary priest showed me by gentle example his love for Jesus and the Church. I gradually became willing to ask for help and to embrace the support community that is the backbone

of recovery. I had to break my natural tendency towards isolation in order to join in the group.

I returned to church, becoming active in my parish. I was encouraged to pray and make a fearless examination of conscience, followed by an honest confession in the sacrament of reconciliation. I humbly received the Body and Blood of Christ. Through receiving his Precious Blood for this final time, I was freed from my past sins, became willing to make amends, and able to become the man I was created to be. The Catholic formation of my youth has become a firm foundation for continued spiritual growth.

Life is still filled with daily challenges, hardship, and pain. I'm still an addict, but my "addiction" today is to God's grace. Through faith, there is joy, hope, and love-sustaining substitutes for chemical escape.

I'm grateful that the obsession to drink and drug has been lifted by God's grace. As I face other destructive patterns in my daily walk, I'm reminded of the words of St. Paul as he struggled with his "thorn ... in the flesh." The Lord spoke to him saying, "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). +


PRAYER

Lord, you command me to love my neighbor. May your love dispel the hatred and resentment in my heart so that I may love all people unconditionally.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 25–March 2

Monday, Weekday:
Sir 1:1–10 / Mk 9:14–29

Tuesday, Weekday:
Sir 2:1–11 / Mt 9:30–37

Wednesday, Weekday:
Sir 4:11–19 / Mk 9:38–40

Thursday, Weekday:
Sir 5:1–8 / Mk 9:41–50

Friday, Weekday:
Sir 6:5–17 / Mk 10:1–12

Saturday, Weekday:
Sir 17:1–15 / Mk 10:13–16

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