

'LOVE YOUR ENEMY' – HOMILY – 19 FEBRUARY 2017

One of the hardest things in life is to love your enemy.

No surprise to say that we can't do it alone.

It is through the love of God that we can try,

Even if we don't know that it is God's love that is enabling us,

Or that we can't admit that it is God's love that is enabling us.

Let us draw on the Holy Spirit to guide us.

In the Old Testament, Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-21 and Deuteronomy 19:21

We have "**the eye for an eye**" passages.

People who are determined to be violent and vengeful, might quote them

As they try to manipulate the Bible to justify themselves.

Today's 1st Reading is from Leviticus 19:1-2. 17-18.

Not hating, but speaking up. 19:17-18,

"You shall not hate anyone of your kin;

you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people,

but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord."

WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOUR?

In the **New Testament we have incredibly challenging examples of loving your enemy.**

In Luke 10:25-37, the '**PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN**'

is the response of Jesus to the question "Who is my neighbour?"

Jesus chose a Samaritan, a traditional foe, an historical enemy

as a model of love.

Pray the passage. Imagine ourselves the person on the road injured.

Imagine ourselves the Good Samaritan.

Imagine ourselves the ones who turn away from someone in need.

And in Luke 23:34, **Jesus, crucified on the cross,**

suffering brutality, derision and intense pain, says

"Father, forgive them;

for they do not know what they are doing."

He forgives the vested interests wanting him dead, he forgives the Romans and the Jewish leaders.

We call the following verse the **GOLDEN RULE.**

Matthew 7:12

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

Today's Gospel of Matthew 5:38-48 includes Matthew 5:44,

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you".

LOVING AND PRAYING

St Paul knew first-hand what it was to be forgiven by God and people in his life.

Christians had been the enemy for him.

Having actively sought out and persecuted Christians, he hears God's call, repents and becomes a Christian.

Being loved by God, he converts.

PAUL'S STATEMENTS IN HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Let us reflect on some of Paul's statements in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 5:10,

*"For if while we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son,
much more surely, having being reconciled, will we be saved by his life."*

Romans 8:35,

*"Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will hardship, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"*

Romans 8:37,

*"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors
through him who loved us."*

Romans 12:14

"Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."

Romans 12:17

*"Do not repay anyone evil for evil,
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all".*

Romans 12:21

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Romans 13:8-10

*"Owe no one anything, except to love one another,
for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
... Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."*

FIVE HEADINGS

I invite you to draw up a sheet of paper, only with **five** headings -

1. MY NEIGHBOUR
2. THOSE I LOVE
3. MY ENEMY
4. THOSE TO WHOM I AM INDIFFERENT
5. INSIGHT OF JESUS

Think about who we would put in each column.

Not asking ourselves to write their names, as someone else might accidentally find it.

Take this to prayer now and again and pray for them.

AS WE OPEN MORE TO THE INSIGHTS OF JESUS, WHAT CHANGES COME ABOUT UNDER THOSE HEADINGS?

WHAT INSIGHT FROM JESUS HELPS US WITH THAT PERSON OR GROUP?

Over time, prayer and reflection, and action,
We include more as our neighbours and we pray that we love more.
We go back over the biblical passages above, picturing people and groups in our minds
As we ponder the passages.

And we do this, with God.
While we still are growing in love, justice and peace, mercy and truth.

Again from today's Gospel Matthew,
Matthew 5:44,

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you".

Let us pray.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Love Your Enemy – 19 February 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/021917.cfm>]

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