

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

By Sr. Katherine "Kit" Gray, CSJ

Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You have heard that it was said,

You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies

and pray for those who persecute you,

that you may be children of your heavenly Father,

for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,

and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.

For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?

Do not the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet your brothers only,

what is unusual about that?

Do not the pagans do the same?

So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Reflection

Today's section from Matthew's Gospel continues Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and is a continuation of his teaching contrasting the Law of Moses and his "new commandment" of love for one another (John 13:30). In today's passage, when Jesus says, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy," he is referring to Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." Although there is no Old Testament commandment to "hate your enemy," in the passage from Leviticus, "your people" and "your neighbor" were understood as one's compatriots. Those other than one's kin were "enemies." Jesus is "extending the boundaries," "enlarging the circle," "opening up the table." Being "perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" means loving "the just and the unjust." It means loving one another as the Father and Son love one another; loving one another as Jesus has loved us (John 13:34).



Silhouette of People During Golden Hour
Photo by Pixabay

For Pondering

- Who are "neighbors?" My "enemies?"
 - How/when do I pray for those who are not like me? Those who do not think like me?
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For Prayer

Spirit & Verse: A Prayer for Living “Fratelli Tutti”

*When our lofty words of love have been emptied of their meaning,
When our borders and computer screens have erected impenetrable walls,
When our minds are so quick to conflate “other” with “enemy,”
How will we find our common humanity?
It's never too late to make an earnest and tender start.
May we remove from our pockets the stones we intended to throw
And cement them together to build a home that welcomes all.
May we repent of our indifference and move into genuine encounter.
Instead of drawing battle lines,
May we draw our chairs up to a communal table,
Where we can feast in the knowledge of our shared dignity.
May God grant us the holy vision
To see every human being a sacred mystery,
And may we love each mystery not abstractly, but concretely.
Just as Thomas touched the wounds of Jesus,
May we be unafraid to touch the wounds of our suffering neighbor.
May we lay down our arms and offer our outstretched hands,
Until there is no “them,” but only “us,”
Until we are at last, sisters and brothers, all.
Amen.*

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