

7th Sunday (C)

- This would have to be one of the most difficult gospel demands & the hardest to put into practice.
- Some years ago I was put to the test - I was driving up to the house here about 11 pm when my headlights caught a young man verbally abusing & hitting a young woman in the top carpark near the house.
- I drove up to within 10 metres of them & having them in my headlight's beam, I got out of my car & asked the woman if she needed help.
- She said she was alright & they started to walk off, but he must have thought better of it & by the time I'd parked my car & was near the back door, he ran up to me & was yelling abuse & started hitting me.
- I found it the hardest to restrain myself from hitting back, even in self-defence, but I knew that it would just escalate the situation.
- I knew I could down him quite easily – he was no bigger than me & he was drunk,.....& I didn't want him to break my new glasses.
- Love your enemies! The words that Jesus addresses to the people in the Gospel are demanding & difficult: to love your enemies, not to curse them, to present the other cheek to anyone who slaps you on one cheek, & not to protest or complain when somebody takes what is yours.
- Taken literally, these commands seem to favor the rich who rob, the more powerful aggressor over the weak victim but is this what Jesus means?
- How are Jesus' words to be understood?
- Two sayings of Jesus help us to understand what he wants to teach & they are about imitating God.
- The first saying is the so called Golden Rule: *"Treat others as you would like people to treat you!"*
- The second saying is *"Be merciful as your Father in Heaven is merciful!"*
- These two directives indicate that Jesus doesn't want simply to change the situation, because nothing will change - he wants to change the system that is wrong & unjust.
- The novelty which He wants to construct comes from the new experience of God as Father, full of tenderness who accepts all!
- Jesus demands an attitude contrary to the ways we have a tendency to operate: "Love your enemies!"
- Threatening the enemy can't be the occasion of revenge even in support of those who are victims, but there is a need for exposing what is wrong & unjust on behalf of those harmed now & for those who will be in the future unless change is effected.
- Love cannot depend on what I receive from others - true love should want the good of others, independently of what he or she does for me.
- Love should be creative, because that is how God's love is for us: *"Be merciful, as your Heavenly Father is merciful!"*

- Practically, all religions in the world have the same Golden Rule with diverse formulations.
- It's a sign that a universal intuition or desire is expressed which comes from God & is part of our being made in the image of God.
- God does not judge our actions in relationship to whether it is someone else's fault - God is more concerned that we do what is right regardless of whatever grudge we could have against someone else.
- We cannot be justified by saying, "It's the other person's fault."
- We have to consider the total impact of the action as well as account for our uncanny ability to rationalize our way into justifying anything that we do.
- First we have to be honest - we can always find ways to deflect the blame on others.
- We have a great tendency to rationalize how it's the other person's fault.
- There hasn't been a war started, especially in the last 100 years that hasn't been the fault of the other nation.
- Countries justify their aggression towards other nations by manipulating facts to achieve their political purposes.
- Today's Gospel speaks about the impact of our actions of love or hate.
- The ideals Jesus puts before us seem so contradictory to the practice of people in the world today...& yet what sort of world do we have?
- His ways of love, forgiveness, sharing & peace are far truer & deeper & lasting than our attitudes of retaliation, suspicion, possession, & violence.
- But that doesn't mean that the followers of Jesus are weak...it takes much more courage & ingenuity to be loving, forgiving, sharing & peacemaking.
- Then there are the words that reveal God's logic about aggression, violence & injustice: *"Do not judge & you will not be judged; do not condemn & you will not be condemned; forgive & you will be forgiven; give & there will be gifts for you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, & overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you."*
- When He says, "there will be gifts for you," Jesus refers to the treatment which God wants to bestow/offer on us.
- But when our way of treating others is mean, God cannot offer us the abundant & overflowing measure that He would want to use because we do not believe in the logic of God & fail to recognize it when it's offered by him to us.
- As Christians we are called to turn attack against us or those being harmed into life-changing love.
- That is the way of Jesus in his giving of latitude in love for the person to change.
- The Christian is called to believe & practice the logic of God.