

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time



Recovery from the crippling patterns of family dysfunction offers plenty of experiences that expand our ability to love and be loved. A few Sundays ago, we heard from Saint Paul regarding the characteristics of love: patience, kindness, rejoices in the truth, bears, hopes, believes, and endures all things. In this Sunday's Gospel reading, we are called to extend that love to all, particularly those we consider "enemies." This is a concept and principle at the heart of 12-step recovery and the sacramental life of the Church.

Love, as described by Jesus, is not just a warm feeling but an action we take for the sake of another and ourselves. This gives an opportunity to grow in our Catholic identity. As we establish healthy boundaries and awaken to a sense of wholeness, this needs to be done with consideration for our own spiritual and emotional wellness.

Jesus, continuing his Sermon on the Plain as told by Luke's Gospel, declares:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

At times, particularly in early recovery, we might be hypersensitive to the way others have wronged us. Left unchecked, this can lead to long-standing resentment and darken our spirits. However, when we remain open to the will of God and humble ourselves to see others the way we would like to be seen, we can come to be grateful for what our "enemies" can provide.

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful," Jesus says. We are called to be merciful in several ways – to those who have wronged us, to those we have wronged, and to ourselves. A few critical movements within the Twelve Steps offer chances to apply the mercy of God to ourselves and others.

Step Four of adult child recovery invites us to make a searching and inventory of our parents because, in essence, we had become them. Per the ACA Solution, when we release our parents from responsibility for our actions today, we become free to make healthful decisions as actors, not reactors. When done with humility and openness, this exercise brings us back into harmony with God, others, and ourselves. It provides an outlet to see the world in a new way.

Reflection Questions

Let us not fool ourselves – this spiritual work is not easy but helps us learn to keep the focus on ourselves in the here and now. However, unless we take this step, the patterns of behavior or unholy attitudes that leave us stuck will continue to play out in our lives, regardless of the actions taken by others. There is but one person we can change – ourselves – and we need God’s providence daily to do that. Let us not get into the cycle of blaming others or failing to take responsibility for our own lives.

A few concluding lines from this Sunday’s Gospel reading mirror the Saint Francis Prayer:

*Stop judging and you will not be judged.
Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.
Forgive and you will be forgiven.*

In becoming willing to open ourselves to receive the unconditional love of God, we are given a chance to pray for those who have wronged us. This moves us to accept our own unconditional love by understanding that Jesus loves us unconditionally, transforming us to become more compassionate and forgiving while opening us to the freedom that comes from fraternal love.

We continue to take personal inventory and to love and approve of ourselves. We avoid morbid reflection and ask God to remove whatever log is stuck in our eye before pointing out the splinter in the eye of our brother or sister. We move forward one day at a time and can enjoy one moment at a time, accepting hardship as the pathway to peace and trusting that He will make all things right if we surrender to His will.

- When you hear Jesus’ command to “love your enemies,” who or what comes to mind?
- How do you engage in resentment? How do resentments impact your relationships and overall spiritual life?
- How have you experienced mercy and how do you share it with others?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 101:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38