



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Fr. David Rosenberg
Institute for Spiritual Direction
visit us at <http://www.ISDministries.org/>

*"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven."
Matt 5:44*

Our Gospel this week recalls how Jesus continues to teach his disciples the *Christian Ideal*, which is the ideal form of love and mercy. Jesus continues to emphasize that he is not canceling the Mosaic laws of conduct, which is well indoctrinated into the fabric of the Orthodox Judaism of His day. Yet the exalted and poetic tone of His preaching lifts and elevates the heart of the listener, smoothing out any harsh or unrealistic tones. While we are to stand up to physical danger defensively, we are exhorted to clearly understand that violence breeds violence. If passive resistance shames our opponent into peace, then such is the better course.

Recalling our lesson from last week's Gospel to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, Jesus continues to teach us that mere observance of the law is not enough. We are called to take on the mantle of Christ in living out the *Christian Ideal* apostolate where love and mercy must prevail. It is not uncommon to be confronted by mean-spirited people that are law abiding. They lack the spiritual illumination and lifestyle practices of the *Christian Ideal*. This is fertile ground for evangelization of this Ideal through our words and action. The dignity of the human person demands that we be ever mindful to avoid the root of all sin, the victimization of others, and likewise live a spiritually transparent life where we, in turn, reject falling victim to the evil wiles of those that would otherwise wish us harm. Jesus is calling us to a higher order, to a ministry of living our grace-filled days as we encounter others and be a *Ministry of Presence* to those most in need of His divine mercy.

The Christian Ideal is patterned after the life of Jesus. He shows us the way: to go to the Father in Heaven, seeking in quietude and prayer a discerned path for our day. Like Jesus, we are to surround ourselves with a small group of like-minded disciples seeking to share our discerned call; we then must go out into the world aware that all our encounters are ministry. We are the Body of Christ, offering healing through Christ for a wounded world.

To paraphrase from the Letter of St James, chapter one, The Christian Ideal is the apostolate where *"...God our Father accepts as pure and undefiled those who come to the aid of orphans and widows in their hardships and keeps oneself untarnished by the world."*

This apostolic *Christian ideal* is passed on from generation to generation *"through the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, in communion of faith and life with her origin."* (see CCC 863) We are called to be *"sent out"* into the world, sharing in this mission in unlimited ways, through the expression of our individual gifts and charisms. We are to daily discern our Christian vocation, which by its nature is *"a vocation to the apostolate."* The *apostolate* is *"every activity of the Mystical Body"* that aims *"to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth."* (see Acts 2) Day by day, as we spent time together in worship and praise, breaking bread with our brothers and sisters, we take on glad and generous hearts. We are to praise God for granting us a sharing with Christians of goodwill. Blessed are we that, living this ideal day by day, the Lord promises to add to our number, as we radiate the light of Christ and give glory to God.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus said to his disciples:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’
But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer.
But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;
and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;
and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.
Give to everyone who begs from you,
and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”*

*“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,
so that you may be children of your Father in heaven;
for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.
For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?
Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?
Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

The Gospel of the Lord

