

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2019

The readings of this Sunday talk about God's justice and human justice. They show that God's justice is the opposite of human justice. They invite us to imitate God in our actions and our life.

The first reading describes the outcome of the relationship between David and King Saul. It shows that as the King wanted to kill David, he fled and found refuge in the desert. The text shows also that as David found king asleep, he refused to harm him. Finally, the text invokes the reason why David refused to kill King Saul by referring to his dignity as anointed of God.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is present in each person, because he is created in his image. There is also the idea that a human person, even though guilty of some crimes, has always some goodness in him. The last idea is related to the truth that the oil of the anointing makes someone special in the eyes of God and his fellow human beings.

This text helps us understand the point Jesus makes in today's Gospel when speaks of the love of enemies. The Gospel starts with Jesus talking to his disciples by inviting them to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate them, bless those who curse them and pray for those who mistreat them.

Then, the Gospel speaks of Jesus invitation to forgiveness and gratuity. The Gospel ends up with Jesus declaration on the principle of reciprocity doubled with gratuity.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today, I want to talk about the love of our enemies. What do I mean by that? Let me explain by referring to an experience of life. As matter of fact, each one of us has always people who have hurt him in one way or another. As a nation, we certainly have memory of September 11 and all the feelings it raises in our heart.

And yet in today's Gospel, Jesus is inviting us to love our enemies, to do good to them, to bless them and pray for them. How do we will to reconcile such a demand and the spontaneous reaction we feel in us when we are hurt by people?

First of all, it is good to make clear what Jesus is talking about. For that reason, we have to know that psychologically speaking there is some degree in love. First, there is what is called filial love. This is a love between parents and their children. Such a love originates from the heart. The heart of parents dictates them to love their children and protect them. We call it also affective love.

Second, there is what we call marital love. This is a love between a husband and a wife. Such a love originates in the passion that is found in each one of us. Because it is a passion, it is sometimes difficult to control. That is why people say she or he fell in love.

The love Jesus is talking about originates in our will; not in our heart or our passion; it is an act of the will. In order for it to work, we have to use our head and not our heart. In truth, Jesus is not asking us to fall in love with our enemies, as we do with our spouses, or to love them as we do with our kids. That would be unrealistic. Rather he challenges us to be determined about our enemies' welfare, to be stubbornly gracious, and to

refuse to pay back violence with violence. Hatred can be defeated only by love; injury can be healed only by forgiveness; evil can be controlled only by goodness.

That is totally the opposite of our cultural ways of considering things. And yet, that is the logic of Jesus, the logic of the kingdom of his Father. If we want to belong to that kingdom, this is the path Jesus sets before us.

Why is Jesus asking us to love our enemies, to forgive the bad done to us without seeking revenge, and to be generous to everyone? First of all, Jesus wants us to put ourselves in the shoes of the others and evaluate how we would react if it were us who would have hurt people or acted wrongly toward them. Would not we expect to be forgiven? Or in need would not we expect to be helped? Thus, Jesus can say, "Do to others as you would have them do to you".

The second reason is the importance of Christian identity. Being Christian is not being anyone; it should make a difference in our life and around us. The disciples of Jesus cannot behave like any other people with regard to any situation in which he is involved. Jesus says it very clearly: If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? – If you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that you to you? Do not sinners do the same?

The third reason is the example of God himself. He is kind, generous and merciful to each one of us. As Psalm 130 says, if God could judge us, who would survive? The way God treats us should inspire us in our behavior toward others. In other words, Jesus is inviting us not to put conditions to our love or to our generosity, or to our forgiveness of others. We must love and forgive like our Father, without condition.

The fourth reason is the principle of reciprocity. The measure we use in judging people, or in giving, or in forgiving, is what comes back to us in turn. If we are generous to people, it is possible they will do the same to us. If we are mean and unforgiving, it is possible that people will do the same with us.

Let me finish by raising this question: Is what Jesus asking of us impossible? Is not this a utopia? Let us remember that the Gospel is not given for heroes or supermen. It is for those who have a filial heart and trust in God. It is only by imitating God that we can live out of Jesus' logic. Human beings, like us, have tried in our century to live out of these principles and have succeeded. Think about Gandhi, M. Luther King, and N. Mandela.

Jesus is asking us to love, that is, not to look on one's rights, but to the needs of others. He invites us to restrain from any kind of violence, even verbal, and to look for forgiveness. He wants us to accept the others even if they have done wrong. That can be truly difficult, but it is not beyond us. That is why we must pray. Only prayer can dissolve aggressiveness, disarm hearts, communicate the sentiments of our Father who is in heaven, and give the force that stems from the love of God. May God bless you all!

1 Samuel 26: 2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49; Luke 6: 27-38



Homily Date: February 24, 2019

© 2019 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD

Contact: www.mbala.org

Document Name: 20190224homily.pdf