

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2022

Suppose a man who has killed a person is brought to justice. As he comes to court, he suddenly finds himself in the presence of his mother and the judge. How will the judge and the mother react vis-à-vis this criminal? I assume that the judge in his duty will try to apply the law as impartially as he can, so that justice might be done. I assume, also, that the mother, driven by her love for her son, and placing herself above any law, will react with compassion and hope that extenuating circumstances can be found to the case of her son.

These two attitudes symbolize two different logics: human logic and God's logic. For human logic, there is nothing else to do in the presence of evil than to stop it or to destroy it. In order to do so, the wicked should be punished, the wickedness eradicated and justice established. The process that leads to the eradication of evil can go from simple justice, to self-defense and even to revenge.

God's logic, on the contrary, is built on compassion, love and forgiveness. It does not mean that God does not see the evildoing; but he gives always to the evildoer and the wicked a second chance so that they may change and come to conversion. If they miss such an opportunity, they can take out only on themselves.

The readings of today confront us with these two logics and challenge us to make wise choices in our lives as we face conflicts and adversities. In the first reading, David, inspired by religious convictions, chooses to forgive and to spare the life of Saul, who was threatening to kill him. The main reason that pushed David to do so is that he considered Saul as the anointed of the Lord. He saw in him more than a mere human being, even if he was guilty of jealousy and envy.

In other words, in each person, God is present; he is present even in a criminal that the whole society rejects for his wickedness. A man, even guilty, is still an anointed of the Lord, that is, a son and daughter of God, worthy of being loved and protected in his rights. God has created him or her in his own likeness. For that reason, it is good to consider that there is more good in someone than the bad he can do.

All that helps us understand the demands Jesus sets for his disciples and for us alike, in today's Gospel. For Jesus, there are four imperatives that should guide the conduct of anyone of his disciples when he is confronted with evil: love, goodness, prayer and blessing.

Jesus does not ask us to fall in love with our enemies, which 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 social and cultural ways of considering things. And yet, that is the logic of Jesus, the logic of the kingdom of his Father and our Father. If we want to possess that kingdom, this is the path Jesus sets before us.

Now, here is a question: Why is Jesus asking his disciples to love their enemies, to forgive the bad done to them without seeking revenge, and to be generous to everyone? First of all, the disciple should put himself in the place of the other and evaluate how he would react if it were he who had hurt people or acted wrongly toward

someone. Would not he expect to be forgiven? Or in need would not he expect to be helped? Thus, Jesus can say, “Do to others as you would have them do to you”. Let us call that as the principle of “Put yourself in the shoes of the other”.

The second reason is the importance of Christian identity. Being Christian should make a difference in our lives and around us. The disciples of Jesus cannot behave like anybody with regard to the events happenings to him. 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? – If you lend money only to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Do not sinners do the same? Let us call that as the principle of “Uniqueness of Christian identity”.

The third reason is the example of our heavenly Father who is kind, generous and merciful with each one of his children. If God could judge us, who would survive? (Psalm 130) The way God treats us should inspire us in our behavior toward one another. 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. God acts like the mother who believes that her son can change in spite of the crime he has committed. Let us call that as the principle of the “Imitation of Our heavenly Father”.

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 with people, it is possible they do the same with us. If we are mean and unforgiving, it is possible that people will have the same attitude towards us. Let us call that as the principle of “What goes around comes around”.

Let me finish with another question: Is what Jesus asking of us impossible? Let us remember that the Gospel is not given for heroes or supermen. It is for simple people like you and me. It is for people who have a flexible heart and keep their trust in God, no matter what. 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, to look for forgiveness. He wants us 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



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