

# Commentary on the Gospel: "Only love overcomes hatred"

Gospel for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C) and commentary.

## **Gospel (*Lk 6:27-38*)**

But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask

them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed

down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.

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## **Commentary**

After presenting the beatitudes, the keys for discovering where true happiness lies (cf. *Lk* 6:20-26), Jesus now points out the path to attain it, an arduous and thorny path, but well worth the effort of traveling it. His words are demanding.

“Love your enemies.” Doesn’t this exceed our human capacity? It is certainly difficult, but also necessary. We only need to open our eyes to see that, in professional relationships, in political and social debates, and even at times among friends and members of one’s own family, people are hurt and injustices are committed, along

with the desire to humiliate others, to hold a grudge, or to inflict revenge. But when these abuses are answered with violence, the consequences are even worse. Conflicts need to be overcome with an entirely different perspective. Jesus' advice is creative and effective: only love can disarm hatred.

“Do good to those who hate you.” Is it just to demand that we do good to someone who holds a grudge against us or has done us harm? “Jesus does not intend to undermine the course of human justice,” Pope Francis said. “He does, however, remind his disciples that in order to have fraternal relationships they must suspend judgment and condemnation ... A Christian must forgive! Why? Because he or she has been forgiven” (*General Audience*, 21 September 2016). Jesus gave his life on the Cross to bring salvation to the

whole world, including those persecuting him.

“Bless those who curse you.” How much damage is done by insults, calumnies, slander, gossip, and how easily we justify ourselves when we join the chorus of gossipmongers! We all need to remain vigilant, since as Saint James warns: “The tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the cycle of nature, and set on fire by hell” (*Jas* 3:6). Speaking ill of others can never be the mark of a disciple of Christ, but rather completely the contrary. A person who knows how to love speaks well even of those who malign him, and desires the best for them—that God may bless them. He prays even for those who harm him: “pray for those who abuse you.”

“Far be it from us,” Saint Josemaria insisted, “to remember who has

offended us or the humiliations we have endured—no matter how unjust, uncivil or unmannerly they may have been—because it would not be right for a son of God to be preparing some kind of dossier, from which to read off a list of grievances. We must never forget Christ’s example” (*Friends of God*, 309). The Christian path requires confronting arduous trials that entail suffering, as Jesus suffered on the Cross. But it is a path of peace, joy and love that leads to happiness. Only those who forgive behave as good children of God our merciful Father and will be blessed.

“This Gospel passage is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian non-violence,” Benedict XVI said in his *Angelus* address on 18 February 2007. “It does not consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of ‘turning the other cheek’ (cf. *Lk* 6: 29) claims, but in

responding to evil with good (cf. *Rom* 12: 17-21) and thereby breaking the chain of injustice ... Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the 'Christian revolution,' a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power: the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world!"

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Francisco Varo

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(04/01/2026)