

SEPTEMBER 12, 2019
Thursday of the 23rd Week in OT
Lk. 6: 27-38

GOING AGAINST THE LOGIC OF THE WORLD

In one of the homilies of Pope Francis at the chapel of Casa Santa Marta, “he recalls that Christians do not follow the spirit of the world but live the folly of the Cross. In a particular way, the day’s liturgy focuses on four details for living the Christian life: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. In his homily, Pope Francis said that Christians should never enter into gossiping, or into the logic of insults, which only cause war, but to always find time to pray for annoying people. This is the Christian style, this is the manner of Christian living. But if I do not do these four things? Loving enemies, doing good to those who hate me, blessing those who curse me, and praying for those who mistreat me, am I not a Christian? Yes, you are a Christian because you have received Baptism, but you are not living like a Christian. You are living like a pagan, with the spirit of worldliness. Barbara Castelli, Vatican News, 13 September 2018

This is the heart of Jesus’ teaching: be prepared to love our enemies and be kind to those who can not pay you back. But what makes Christians and Christianity as a whole distinct from any other religion? It is the teaching of Jesus Christ: treating others, not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated – with mercy, kindness and love expecting nothing in return. Always remember, God is good to the unjust and sinners as well as the just and saints. He embraces everyone without limit, without inhibitions, without boundaries. Our love for those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us must be the same kindness and mercy God has given and shown to us.

According to St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD), Jesus double precept to give and forgive are two essential wings of prayer: "Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and it

will be given you. These are the two wings of prayer on which it flies to God. Pardon the offender what has been committed and give to the person in need" (Sermon 205.3). "Let us graciously and fervently perform these two types of almsgiving, that is, giving and forgiving, for we in turn pray the Lord to give us things and not to repay our evil deeds" (Sermon 206.2). Don Schwager, www.dailyscripture.net

But most of the time we ask ourselves, how can I do this: love those who cause me harm or bad things? For us, it is impossible but with God all things are possible. The love of God conquers everything even our hurts, resentment, fears and prejudices. Only by the cross and through the cross of Jesus Christ, we are free us from the oppression of hatred, revenge, and anger and gives us the courage to return evil with good. That is why, we are being reminded by St. Paul: "bless and not curse... nor take revenge... and to overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14,17,21). Only in prayer, in communion with God that we can do this. Let God enters your heart and He will transform you from hating those who cause you harm to being forgiving and understanding. I always say to those people who experienced hardship in forgiving people: You can not do it alone, you need God. You can not forgive others but with God you can. If you abandon all to God, He will take care of everything.

So, my brothers and sisters, the gospel is challenging us: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you - the high road to sharing in the life of God. And "your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High."