

## LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

The power of love comes hand in hand with power of forgiveness, the power of willingness to forgive and love others is a gateway to heaven; whoever forgives will forever find peace. The Scriptures are always reminding us about the love of God and the power to forgive others.

Luke 6:27-36 states, "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also". To love our enemies does not mean that we suddenly become their friends. If it is our enemies we are to love, they must remain enemies. Unless you have enemies, you cannot love them. And if you have no enemies, I wonder if you have any friends. The moment you choose your friends, their enemies become your own enemies. By having convictions, we make ourselves the enemies of those who oppose these convictions. But let's be sure we agree on what we mean by terms like friend, enemy, hatred, and love.

Most of us, sadly, go through life with good and bad, "for better or worse", and no matter how hard we try we always seem to have "enemies". Or, more simply, people seem to hate us. There are people whom we've offended and to whom we've apologised, but who refuse to accept our apologies. There are people at work who we've angered, who are jealous of us or who have set themselves against us. There are people in our families who hold a grudge against us for some mysterious reason that we can never comprehend. And there are people who seem to dislike us or wish us ill for no good reason. It's a sad part of human life. I personally find what Jesus is telling us is hard, but it's not impossible. And it's necessary, too, because ultimately he is inviting us not only to forgiveness and charity but to something else: freedom and happiness. So you have heard that it was said, and you have heard that it was said to you by Jesus, who wants you to be happy.

There are ways that we can express ourselves by loving our enemies:

- Pray for them

Oftentimes, we get too caught up in the hate we feel for a certain person that we don't stop and look at them as a human being who is facing the heartbreaks and tribulations that life brings. We view them as a machine whose sole purpose is to make our lives hell. Pray for these people. Ask God to give you the eyes that He has, the eyes that see you as His perfect Son's image, despite all of your wrong doings against Him.

- Forgive them

Mark 11:25 states, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you."

The most amazing way love was displayed to us was Christ loving us despite our constant sinning against Him. If we are called to be Christ-like, doesn't that mean we ought to do the same? Forgive others of their transgressions against us? YES, a million times – YES. We don't deserve the forgiveness offered to us, so why should we withhold forgiveness from those who are equal to us?

- Show Kindness

Colossians 3:12 states, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."

Now, there is a difference between doing kind things and BEING kind. Being a genuinely kind person towards one another requires you to love them and have a willingness to be selfless.

- Get to know them

Hebrews 10:24-25 states. "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..."

Honestly, this can be the hardest one. Taking time out of your day to get to know someone you don't necessarily like can be a daunting thought. Once you actually sit down and get to know your enemy, you will find it will get harder and harder to hate them. When you get the opportunity to hear about where someone has come from and what they've been through, it's extremely hard NOT to relate to them.

Loving our enemies is an ideal for human beings of any spiritual tradition. Mahatma Gandhi practiced it no less inspiringly than St. Francis. But it calls to mind the saying of Jesus: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". Br Mlungisi Mabe said that we are not born with revenge and the revenge that we live in this world was begotten here; we must leave revenge to God because revenge is of God and God will deal with your enemies. What we have to do is to wear the smile of forgiveness and love. He further asked who we are not to forgive when even God himself forgave his enemies.

I invite you to consider the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, i.e. Mass is full of forgiveness and love from the start to finish. The penitential rite (Lord have mercy), the love of God during the sharing of the word God himself is speaking to us showing the fatherly love that no one can show, the Creed by which we profess our belief, essentially, in God's love and mercy towards us, the Our Father in we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us", etc.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 12:15)

Lesego Zikhali