

7TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – YEAR A

What is it that makes it possible to love in the way that Jesus loves ? To continue loving in spite of cruelty and persecution? And, what is it about the Father's love that bends his heart toward both the bad and the good alike? (Matt 5:45)

The answer, I would suggest, is family.

In the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Father's love embraces every person who has ever lived, or will ever live. We are God's children, and as any parent knows, when it comes to our children, we can tolerate a lot. When the Father looks upon each one of us, he sees reflected in our eyes and in our souls, the image of his, 'Only Begotten Son.'

As God's children, we are also sisters' and brothers' of one another (Gal 3:26; John 1:12,) and as any sibling knows, when it comes to our brothers' and sisters', we can tolerate quite a bit as well.

Today Jesus calls us to see one another in this radically new way. Today Jesus is calling us to an inclusive love. A love that embraces everyone as a sister or a brother, as the Father's love embraces each of us as a daughter or son.

It is recognising the other as our sister or our brother, that makes it possible to continue loving them, even when they treat us as enemies.

So then, must we allow others to treat us as they may? Absolutely not! "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves," Jesus taught (Matt 10:16). We have every right to protect ourselves, reasonably, against the evil that others do. Jesus himself, on different occasions, avoided the violence of the mob because his time had not yet come. (Matt 2:13; Luke 4:30; John 7:30).

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No-one has the right to be cruel to others, in word or deed. The victims of cruelty are God's children too, and there is a reckoning for all those who treat his little ones without love. (Matt 12:35-37; 25: 41-46; Rom 14:12)

We, however, must not allow our love to be replaced by hatred. (Lev 19:17-18; 1 John 2:11; 3:15) We must always remember the words of Jesus today, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven." (Matt 5: 44-45)