

7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY  
TIME (A)

February 19, 2016

**A MESSAGE FROM GOD**



\* **Lv 19:1-2.17-18** – The demands of the love of neighbor in the Old Testament



\* **1 Cor 3:16-23** – We are God's most precious temple.

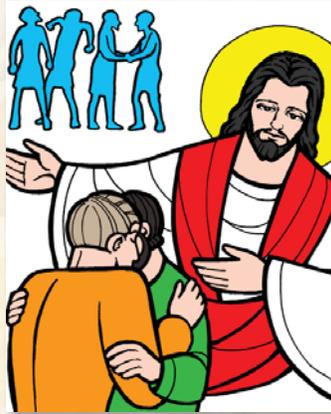


\* **Mt 5:38-48** – God's love for all men is our model in our love of neighbor.

For the complete Biblical texts, see "The New Exploring God's Word," Year A, Part 1, pp. 112-115.

"Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. You shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord!"

(Lv 19:2b.17a.18)



Jesus said to his disciples: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same?"

(Mt 5:44-46)

*The Challenge to Love  
Without Borders*

**O**n April 27, 1994, the first democratic and multiracial elections were held in South Africa. That marked the end of the "Apartheid" but not of the problems of that divided nation. There was a real danger of a bloodbath. Not a few among the blacks wanted to take revenge against the whites for all the sufferings and humiliations they had endured during the decades of "White Rule."

It was thanks to the initiative of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the magnanimity of Nelson Mandela that a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (TRC) was set



up in 1995. According to that initiative, those who had committed injustices during the period of the Apartheid were expected to come forward, acknowledge their wrongdoings, and apologize for them and seek amnesty. The victims would come forward, too, and forgive their offenders. Obviously, the purpose of that exercise was to promote national unity and reconciliation. It was an idealistic scenario.

Many of those who had perpetrated crimes, however, refused to present themselves to the

Commission. Others who had suffered so much were not prepared to forgive. They demanded justice – which, in that specific case, meant severe retribution. But a sizeable number of both whites and blacks accepted the invitation and cooperated with the TRC. Thanks to them, an atmosphere of reconciliation began to set in, with the determination to leave the past behind. Thus, the whole nation started moving forward in peace, blacks and whites working together to build a better and fairer society.

### CONNECTING THE DOTS . . .

- Thanks to the forgiving attitude inculcated by the two great South African leaders, that nation was spared the racial and civil war that instead plagued other countries that were bent on hating their former colonizers.
- The case of the positive result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is not just a memorable success story but also a proof that forgiveness of one’s enemies is both possible and very fruitful.
- Its positive result proved the wisdom of the Old Testament commandment: contained in today’s First Reading. (See the text reproduced in the scroll on the left side of p. 6.)
- Jesus not only confirmed the commandment to love one’s neighbor, but also broadened the meaning of the term “neighbor” to encompass every human being, including one’s enemies.
- He also enjoined his disciples, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes his rain to fall on the just and the unjust” (See today’s Gospel passage).
- Such was the most demanding part of Jesus’ teaching. And he lived his whole life up to his death on the cross, always being perfectly true to his teaching.
- It is now our turn to follow his example by loving our neighbor the way Jesus did.

### LIVING THE WORD

#### The Challenge

- Do you agree with Jesus’ teaching that we should love our enemies?
- Do you think that a person can be a good Christian if he/she refuses to forgive one’s offenders?
- Are you able to forgive right away those who offend or hurt you?

#### My Commitment

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### PRAYING THE WORD

#### My Message for God

Compose a prayer in which you ask the Lord to grant you the grace and the moral strength that you need to forgive all those who have hurt you, and to do good to them.

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