

7TH SUNDAY ORD. (C)
THE LORD REWARDS EACH MAN FOR HIS JUSTICE AND FAITHFULNESS

The common theme for the readings is to love one's enemies and do good to them. This is a difficult task for almost all people because of our human nature taken from the first man, Adam. But why are we to undertake that task? It is because through the last Adam, Jesus, we have been born of the Spirit and so we should live according to the Spirit's direction. Furthermore, the Lord will reward each man according to his righteousness and his faithfulness. That win for us the status of being children of God.

The life of David is a testimony to this fact, that God rewards each man for his righteousness. He was hated by Saul, the king, for no offence committed, but by the fact that after killing Goliath, the women apportioned thousands of victories to David, and hundreds to Saul. That angered Saul and he decided to eliminate him, because he was afraid his family would lose the right to be the king of Israel. But God protected David, and as we heard, David had the opportunity to kill his enemy. David respected his king and he protected him. He even scolded Abishai for suggesting that Saul be killed.

The life of David in relation to Saul, is what Jesus, in the gospel, is telling us to imitate. Jesus was reversing the teaching which was given to the Israelites in the desert. What Jesus is teaching about is not normal for all those who have not been born of the Spirit. It is not normal in the eyes of the world, and it is difficult for many of us to follow. We have no option but to love our enemies and to feed them. Jesus tells us that for people to know that we are Christians we are to bless those who hate us, and lend to those who cannot pay back. We will get nothing from God when we are only interested in doing good to those who do good to us. He said that sinners do the same.

St. Paul also reminded the believers in of Rome this same message of Christ. He said: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them... Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all...Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their head,'" (Rom.12:14;17-20). St. Peter has a similar

message for all believers in his first letter: "Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It was for this that you were called - that you might inherit a blessing," (1Pet.3:10). From Jesus to the apostles, it is obligatory for every Christian to forgive when offended. We are called to forgive every day till we die. When we forgive, we become children of God; we receive blessings, and it is God who responds to the curse or abuse we suffer from.

This is the truth of our faith that God has given us an example by giving us His Son to take away our sins. Thus, we who follow Him should learn from Him. He is going to reward each man for his righteousness and faithfulness. We know what happened to Saul; he died miserably. I am guilty of this and I know many of you here may also be guilty. I find it difficult to let go easily when offended, and I am quick to give to those I know may give me double what I have offered. Even among us here in the Church, it may be a problem. Some may not come to this or that Mass, or sit far away because he or she wants to avoid somebody. We are afraid to let go of an offence because we don't want to be considered weak or cowards. We want to show that we have the ability to pay back in the person's own coin.

But forgiveness is like taking a bitter pill that cures the stubborn disease. It heals the soul. We become like Christ who prayed: "Father forgive them, for they know what they are doing," (Lk.23:34). It will bring us peace and joy, and it can save us from heart problems.

(Pause and call to mind those who have wronged you or you have wronged, and pray for forgiveness and healing).