Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time — February 20, 2022

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

There is an old saying that you have to fight fire with fire. Frankly, I have never quite understood this saying. In the literal sense it is obviously false.; you have to fight fire with water. I suppose that in the figurative sense it is supposed to mean that you cannot let people take advantage of you. If people cheat you, you have to cheat them back. If people malign you or vilify you, you have to treat them in kind.

How different from this approach is the teaching of Jesus. In effect, he says that we must fight the fire of hatred with the quenching water of love. Jesus tells us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, and to bless those who curse us. The scholars point out that the word "curse", used in the original Greek, implies spite, jealousy, bad will. Jesus then, is not talking about a situation in which someone may unintentionally hurt us, as for instance when someone says something that wounds our feelings without realizing it. No, Jesus is talking about even those circumstances in which someone deliberately and maliciously offends us.

It is easy for us to profess that we love all humankind – all humankind that nebulous something which we never encounter except in the abstract. It is an altogether different manner to love an individual in the concrete who is, from the natural point of view, entirely unlovable as far as we are concerned. Jesus refuses to allow us the complacency of professing a love for humankind in general. He has deliberately put his teaching about love as the greatest commandment within the context of its severest tests and proof. Christianity is not supposed to be easy. I am a demanding religion that is intended to bring out the highest qualities of the human spirit, as elevated and assisted by God's grace. In fact, it is only by God's grace that we can live the Christian life. The teaching of Jesus in this weekend's gospel, viewed humanly, is difficult in an extreme degree.

Jesus did not merely mouth this doctrine. He practiced what he preached and taught. In his passion and death, Jesus put his teaching into practice. Even though the human race had disobeyed God and lost his friendship Jesus did not abandon us. Even though we had offended God, Jesus did not decide to have nothing to do with us. He gave the supreme expression of love by dying on the Cross. And his love and his forgiveness were not just for some nebulous abstraction known as "sinful mankind." His love and forgiveness were for each of us individuals who had maligned and vilified him and conspired to put him to death.

The love taught by Jesus is a demand that unaided human nature cannot meet. We must put out the fire of hatred by means of the quenching waters of Christian love.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**February 22**	**11:00AM**
Esteban Echano Jr. (healing)		Lisa Urbano
Wed.	**February 23**	**11:00AM**
Czarina Clara Lacsina		Imelda
Thur.	**February 24**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Fri.	**February 25**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Sat.	**February 26**	**4:30PM**
Athena Bernas		Imelda
Sun.	**February 27**	**9:00AM**
Yumi Lipton & Dolly Lacsina		Imelda
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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