

Reflection Questions

- Who or what do you consider your enemy?
Specifically, who do you feel has threatened your security, self-esteem, relationships, or ambitions?
 - What caused that to happen?

- Are there feelings of resentment that remain looming in your life?
 - What is your part in each resentment?

- What action can you take to extend love, compassion, and mercy to those who have wronged you?

- Are you working through the twelve steps?
 - What step are you on?

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time



Our recovery journey is shaped by the merciful love of God and challenges us to grow as Christians into the men and women that Jesus calls us to be. We have been claimed by our Creator and given experiences which expand our ability to love and be loved. A few weeks ago, we heard from Saint Paul regarding the characteristics of love (patience, kindness, rejoices in truth, bears, hopes, believes, and endures all things). In this week's Gospel reading, we are called to extend that love to all, particularly those we consider *enemies*. This is a concept and principle at the heart of twelve-step recovery and the sacramental life of the Church.

Love, as described by Jesus, is not a warm feeling but an *action* we take. As we extend love, compassion, and mercy to those who trouble us, we are given a gift from God and an opportunity to grow in our Catholic identity. We know our own powerlessness and are given a chance to step into the shoes of others.

Jesus, continuing His Sermon on the Plain as told by Luke's Gospel, declares:

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Throughout our recovery journey, we are often very in tune with the way we have been wronged by others. Left unchecked, this can lead to long-standing resentment and darken our spirits. However, when we remain open to the Word of God and humble ourselves to see others the way we would like to be seen, we can come to be grateful for what our enemies can provide.

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,” Jesus says. We are called to be merciful in a number of ways—to those whom we have wronged us, to those we have wronged, and to ourselves. A few critical movements of the Twelve Steps offer a chance to apply the mercy of God to ourselves and others.

Step 4 invites us to *make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*. We begin this step by listing those who have threatened our security, self-esteem, relationships, and ambitions. We complete Step 4 by recognizing *our part* in the resentment and note the nature of our shortcomings, which allowed the resentment to surface and kept us from God's will. When done with humility and openness, this exercise brings us back into harmony with God, others, and ourselves. It provides an outlet to see the world in a new way.

Let us not fool ourselves—this spiritual work is not easy and none of us like to admit the part we play in harboring resentment. However, unless we take this step, the patterns of behavior or unholy attitudes which leave us stuck will continue to play out in our lives, regardless of the action taken by others. Through this lens, we can rejoice in the opportunities for growth offered by our enemies.

A few concluding lines from this week's Gospel reading mirror that of the Saint Francis Prayer:

*Stop judging and you will not be judged.
Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.
Forgive and you will be forgiven.*

In preparation for making amends, we are given a chance to pray for those who have wronged us. When done consistently over an extended period of time, this prayer changes us to become more compassionate and forgiving while opening us to the freedom that comes from the amends process.

In our daily inventory, we ask God to show us where we have been selfish, dishonest, fearful, or inconsiderate. We avoid morbid reflection and ask God to remove whatever log is stuck in our eye before pointing out the splinter in the eye of our brother or sister. Therefore, we can enjoy one moment at a time and find glory in the One who has freed us from sin.