



Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 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? And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I wish to open my heart and let your Gospel message penetrate me and change my life. I believe that you love me and that you died for me; yet when tested by the demands of the Gospel, my faith and generosity waiver. Nevertheless, once more I confess my faith in you and my determination to work to please you alone.

Petition: Jesus, teach me true charity!

1. Revenge or Justice. "An eye for an eye..." - Revenge has a tantalizing attraction. Oh, how we enjoy those movies where the down-and-out hero suddenly gets the upper hand, pays back all the evil the villain has been inflicting on others, and justice prevails. But is this really justice? Jesus speaks clearly: "But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil." Our virtue must go beyond that of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

2. Perfect Justice. Christ invites us to go beyond the "tit-for-tat" mentality: "When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to

him as well.” Jesus is not trying to teach us passivism; rather, he is inviting us to discover that love is the perfection of justice. Humility and forgiveness are the pillars of this radically new mentality. Only in the light of these can we hope to build true and enduring peace in the world, amongst those around us and even within ourselves.

3. Self-giving Love: Fulfillment of this attitude is not merely to avoid direct retaliations but rather to form a generous and magnanimous heart which knows how to give itself without ever giving up. Jesus gave not only his tunic and cloak, but all of his clothes to those who were to crucify him (cf. John 19:23). Jesus walked the extra mile, which brought him to the top of Calvary (cf. John 19:17). Jesus promised salvation to the criminal who asked him to remember him (cf. Luke 23:42-43).

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, you are God. You came down from heaven to teach me how to love, but I have such a hard time loving those around me and even loving myself sometimes. By your almighty grace, help me to be more like you, to forgive and to give myself to others so that I can help make their lives just a bit happier.

Resolution: I will perform one small act of charity today: thinking or speaking well of someone, or offering myself to help someone.