



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."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you present a message that is not easy for my fallen nature to accept. However, I believe in your words, and I trust in you because you alone have the words of eternal life. As I begin this moment of prayer, I turn to you as one in need. I want only to please you in all I do.

Petition: Lord, help me to embrace your call to turn the other cheek.

1. The Leitmotif: Can we discover a unifying thread in this week's Gospel readings? One that stands out is the radical newness of Christ's Kingdom. It is new in its fundamental principle: a charity that must extend to loving one's very enemies (Monday and Tuesday). It is new in the intentions which must motivate all our actions (Wednesday). It is new in the way we are to pray to our Father in heaven (Thursday). And, finally, it is new in the radical demands it places upon us as followers of Christ: We must make this Kingdom our only treasure (Friday) and seek it above everything else in life (Saturday). What a privilege to be called to the mission of helping to establish such a Kingdom! What a joy, what an honor, what a glory to be the subjects of such a King! Do people encounter a "newness", a freshness, in my approach to life? Is it rooted in

Christ's new teaching?

2. A New Legislator: We find ourselves at the heart of Christ's discourse in his Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord attributes to himself an authority that must have startled and even shocked his Jewish listeners. He claims the power to alter what has been proclaimed in the very Law of Moses and the prophets — the absolute source of authority for the Jewish faith. Remember that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, and God put his word in the mouths of the prophets. So, when Jesus says, "You have heard it said.... But I say to you..." only two alternatives are possible: Either Christ is a madman, or he is truly the Son of God, the one who has come "not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them." I may agree that he is truly the Son of God, but do I embrace all of his teachings?

3. Turning the Other Cheek: It would certainly be hard to find words more radical than these. Who would dare to speak them, if not the Son of God himself? He would live them out fully in his own life, allowing himself to be nailed to the cross by evil men. But is it really possible for us to live them as his followers, as Christians? Do we really turn the other cheek when someone strikes us? If people demand something of us unjustly, do we give them even more than they ask? What could be the purpose of these commands from Christ, which seem to leave us vulnerable and defenseless? In the end, it is only such heroic charity that will be able to win over evil men to the cause of the Gospel. And that is precisely what Christ, our Savior, longs for. "God ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I long to have a heart that is more like yours. Warm my selfish heart so that I will lovingly turn the other cheek as you ask of me. Help me to grow in zeal for all men to be saved and to come to know you in their lives.

Resolution: I will do an act of kindness for someone with whom it is difficult for me to get along.