

Fr. Martin's Reflection – February 20, 2022

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Gospel Jesus enjoins his own disciples to follow the basic imperative of loving generously: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly ... Give, and there will be gifts for you... because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back."

Jesus does not ask his disciples to fall in love with their enemies – that would be wholly unrealistic. The followers of Jesus are challenged to be determined about their enemy's welfare, to be stubbornly gracious, and to refuse to pay back violence with violence. Hatred can be defeated only by love; injury can be healed only by forgiveness; evil can be controlled only by goodness. That may not reflect conventional wisdom, but it is Jesus' wisdom in action. It was also David's response to King Saul's aggression.

In his own life Jesus had to work hard at honoring his own ethic. That process was not a painless or bloodless affair; it cost Jesus everything. He offered love first, even though he knew that the return would never measure up to what was offered; he never bargained love for love; he never became involved in stocktaking returns. Above all, he made a habit of confusing his enemies with love.

Jesus expects us, his followers, to share the gifts we have received. Love is offered because someone somewhere is shuffling through a loveless life. Mercy is given because someone somewhere is cloistered in his or her wrongdoing. These are gifts which create worth in another person; they build temples in wasteland; they introduce people to the forgotten geography of paradise; they stop the contagion of meanness.

Love creates its own reality, its own force for goodness. It enables us, time after time, to refuse the offer of putting a spear through the heart of our sleeping victims.

Let us pray for the ability to forgive and always seek forgiveness. Have a blessed week.

(Our reflection is taken from: Seasons of the Word – Denis McBride C.Ss.R)

Fr. Martin