

Seventh Sunday – Ordinary Time – Year A

Last week JC expanded on the Commandments

You have heard it said --- But I say to you --- Well it continues this week!

Let me give you some background, to understand what JC tells us this week:

1st, Jewish custom, slapping someone with the back of one's hand was **twice** as insulting as slapping him with the palm of one's hand.

- A right-handed person slapping someone on the right cheek is a backhanded blow.

2nd, By law, a Jew could be forced to hand over **a tunic** as a payment of a debt

- (even poor men of the time would have owned two tunics), but **not his cloak**.
- Most people had only one cloak - used as a coat during the day, and a blanket at night.

3rd, Palestine during the time of Jesus was under direct Roman control.

- The Romans were permitted by law to **enlist** Jews as guides or pack-bearers for a mile of any journey they may be taking.

So, what is Jesus really asking of us when he tells us to turn the other cheek, to hand over our cloak as well as our tunic, and to voluntarily go an extra mile?

- He is teaching us how to respond to **personal insults and humiliations**.
 - Jesus wants us to respond to personal insults with **grace, patience, and forgiveness**.
 - He wants us to break the cycle of violence by going **out of our way to do good to others**, even when they don't **deserve** it.
 - That's what God did with us by sending Jesus to be our Savior. AND that's what he wants us to do for those around us.
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Cardinal Francis Xavier Van Thuan spent **14 years in prison** in Communist Viet Nam.

They arrested and even tortured him, trying to get him to **give up** his Catholic faith.

But instead, he chose to **live his faith** - even in prison, work camps, solitary confinement.

Here is how he describes what happened.

In the beginning, the guards did not talk to me. I was terribly sad. I wanted to be kind and polite with them, but it was impossible. They avoided speaking with me.

One night a thought came to me: "I am still very rich. I have the **love of Christ** in my heart; I'll love them as Jesus has loved me."

The next day I started to **love them even more**, to love Jesus in them, smiling and exchanging kind words with them. I began to tell them stories of my trips abroad, of how people live in America, in Canada, in Japan, in the Philippines... about economics, about freedom, about technology. This stimulated their curiosity and they began asking me many questions. Little by little we became friends. They wanted to learn foreign languages, French, English... **And my guards became my students!**

That's the **power** of Christ-like love, the love we are all called to live.

- The standard that Jesus sets seems too high for us.
 - We just can't live this kind of radical, self-less, Christ-like love.
 - "It's beyond what I can do" – well, your right if you do it on your own strength.
 - BUT the good news of Christianity is that we don't **have** to do it on our own.
- Jesus is with us; Mary is with us; the saints and the angels are with us; the entire Church is with us. They are here to teach us to love as God loves.
- Jesus **walks beside us** every day to teach us how to love others as he loves us.
 - That was the lesson of Good Friday - betrayed and abandoned by his closest friends, cruelly tortured, slandered, publicly humiliated, and unjustly condemned and put to death.
 - Throughout the ordeal, he never once resented, hated, or retaliated.
 - Instead, he prayed for his enemies: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"
- This is the love that is also present in the **Eucharist**, the supernatural food for our Christian souls
 - So that we might actually have the spiritual strength to love our enemies as JC did