

From Our Regional Spiritual Assistant

Love and Mercy-the Magnanimity of God: *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Lk 6:27).* Jesus proclaimed this command following the announcement of the beatitudes and to the very same group of people. He gave it to those who were poor, hungry or persecuted, as a condition to obtain the happiness he had promised them in God's Kingdom; that is, they were to love the very ones who caused their poverty, hunger, made them weep and persecuted them.

As challenging as this may be, the Gospel calls us to an even higher standard: we must be merciful as God is merciful. It is impossible to attain such perfection relying on our own power but when we rely on the power of the risen Lord whose image we bear, all things are possible. Transformed by the power of resurrection, we are capable of unprecedented good works. We can live without retaliation; we can render good for evil.

David had been faithful to king Saul all through his life. He had killed for him the mighty Goliath, risked his life in battles and done nothing wrong against him. However, king Saul out of jealousy quests for the life of David. God provided David with a golden opportunity to strike down the life of Saul with his very own spear while encamped and asleep. However, David would not raise his hands on the God's anointed, though it was considered sacred to take revenge in those days and foolish and even dangerous to spare the life of enemies. This is an example of magnanimity of David who spared the life of his bitter enemy because he was God's anointed one.

When Jesus calls us to love everyone, he means every word of it. Exclusion of enemies would violate the very command of love. Jesus loved and forgave His enemies. After His example, He commands His followers to do the same. We have been anointed by the death of Jesus. Like David, who saw in Saul, God's 'anointed' one, we in each other must see as God's 'anointed' one. When we do that, how can we cause poverty, hunger, or persecute the anointed one? We must be magnanimous like David to forgive and wish all good for people who may even cause us misery. Our love for others, even those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us, must be marked by the same kindness and mercy which God in Jesus has shown to us.

The purpose of our life is to reflect the love of God. God continues to love us even when we do not reciprocate His love. His love is salvific, He continues to save us even when we go against his will. It is the grace of God, that we are not treated as we deserve but with mercy and kindness. It is easier to show kindness and mercy when we can expect to benefit from doing so. How much harder when we can expect nothing in return. Those who emulate the love and mercy of the heavenly Father, are His true children.

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