

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) O Lord, I trust in your merciful love. My heart will rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord who has been bountiful with me.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 102)

ANTIPHON: The Lord is kind and merciful.

RESPONSE: The Lord is kind and merciful.

LECTOR: My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name. My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings. **R.**

LECTOR: It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion. **R.**

LECTOR: The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. He does not treat us according to our sins nor repay us according to our faults. **R.**

LECTOR: As far as the east is from the west so far does he remove our sins. As a father has compassion on his sons, the Lord has pity on those who fear him. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) I will recount all your wonders, I will rejoice in you and be glad, and sing psalms to your name, O Most High.

Or

Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, who is coming into this world.

TODAY'S READINGS 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

NEXT WEEK (8th Sunday, Year C) Sir 27: 4-7; Psalm 91; 1 Cor 15: 54-58; Luke 6:39-45

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Do good to those who hate you



20 February 2022 7th Sunday Year C

In the Book of Samuel we find two mortal enemies, David and Saul, in conflict. Saul is the anointed King of Judah and David has been anointed to succeed him. What happens next is an all too familiar human story.

David is jealous of Saul's power; Saul is suspicious of David's motives. How often family feuds and human relations take on these negative forces of jealousy and suspicion resulting in the breakdown of relationships. We also see this operating at the international level between ethnic groups and nations resulting in open conflict.

To return to the story of King Saul and the yet-to-be appointed King David, there is a glimmer of light. Previously, in a rage, Saul attempted to kill David by throwing a javelin at him! In today's story, David has the opportunity to kill Saul, but relents. Even here we note David's motives are not entirely pure. He acts partly out of guilt, fearing divine anger if he was to kill one of God's anointed.

Let us now compare this approach to the words of Jesus in today's gospel: "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you." At a logical level, Jesus' reasoning is difficult to dispute: "If you only love those who love you, what thanks can you expect?" No, says Jesus, you must overcome all those narrow views of love and forgiveness: "Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate." Moreover, "don't judge

others, don't condemn, always forgive."

We may complain that Jesus is asking too much of us! Surely all this love and forgiveness will be seen as weakness, leading us to be trodden underfoot by our enemies! Yet, something within us knows we must break the cycle of violence and vengeance if we are to achieve peace, harmony and goodwill among people and nations. This is the way of the Gospel as lived and proclaimed by Jesus.

This is also the centre-point of Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) where he uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to insist that love must go beyond tribe, family and nation to include stranger, migrant and refugee. We also note Francis' joint statement with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi (2019) which acknowledged that "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters."

In today's world, 'loving your enemy' is best expressed in terms of commitment to dialogue and mutual respect among peoples of diverse religions and cultures. This enables us to open our hearts to become people of love, service and compassion. This way, we allow God's love to enter our lives and world keeping in mind Jesus' words: "The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back!"

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