

**Love Enemies, Aliens, Strangers**      Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time/C      February  
24, 2019      1 Sm 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23;      1 Cor 15:45-49;      **Lk 6:27-38**      (Children's  
Mass)      (We are supposed to start caring beyond the boundaries that we normally have.)

I don't know about the young people here tonight but I would say the majority of adults have heard this gospel many times and perhaps we don't admit how really odd it is for Jesus to tell us to love—whom? Kyle, whom? Not others, enemies, **how odd that God says we are to love our enemies!** I can tell you from my study of religions, this is the only one that says that. **There is no such hint anywhere else.**

Now I will ask the young people where—Andrew, I will ask you—where would Jesus get this? Where would he get this idea that he is supposed to tell people that they are to love their enemy? From himself, well you are close. He got it from the Father, from God whom he knows intimately. He is saying that **we need to live just as God lives**, which, by the way, is not natural. What he is asking us to do is not something natural, but something very unnatural. But **his unique grasp of who God is and what God's nature is and what God's will is forces him to do this.** He insists that God is good and benevolent—anybody know what benevolent means? Will, what does benevolent mean? You don't know? Okay, well-meaning, benevolent, well-wishing, well-meaning. God is well-wishing us, wants us to have the best. So that's Jesus' view; **God is well-meaning and well-wishing and good to good and evil people.** So the idea that God is good to the good and bad to the bad—wrong! God is good to everybody. In the famous statement Jesus says, "The sun shines on the good and the evil; the rain falls on the just and the unjust." God blesses everyone. Why? Because **God acts according to God's own nature and God's own will.** He is not reacting to people, as we usually do. We react; don't we? **We react to people.** They are good to us, we are good to them; they are bad to us, well, we would like to be bad to them. And Jesus said, well that is not what I'm encouraging you to do. **God's mercy is infinite.**

Now our ability to receive is not necessarily infinite, not because we are not created to be infinite, but we block—we block—the channels of divine giftedness. **We stop what God is trying to do in us.** Why do we do that? Because **we prefer our own wisdom and our independence** to the wisdom of God and what St. Paul called "the freedom of the children of God." So what is very natural is also very bizarre and, frankly, irrational. And that's the way we are.

But we don't have to stay that way. **We can change.** And that's why when Jesus preached he always began his whole gospel with this message: you must change. This is called repentance. It's called conversion, in Greek it's *metanoia*, if you like that word. But it's a real change **in the way we think and feel.** Without changing the way we think and feel, **if we just remain natural, we will never follow Christ, really.**

So loving our enemies is not natural, but Jesus is not calling us to be natural or rational or realistic. He is calling us to rise above our nature, to become godly. The whole meaning of his becoming human is that we can become divine. So our concern cannot be just for our friends or our families of the people we like or the people who like us. **Our concern is to be for the whole of God's creation: strangers, aliens, and enemies included.**

Now this takes practice. How are we going to do this? Ann, have any ideas? How can we do this? How can we set forth to start to love people who are totally strangers that we don't even know? Any ideas? It's okay if you don't. David, what do you say? Just do it, well, okay. We do it, but we have to do it in a specific way; we have to actually make the choice to put into practice **this ideal, this teaching, this desire, this demand, of God.**

**One of the most urgent needs in our world today of many people that we don't even know is food.** It's astonishing how many people go to bed hungry, if going to bed is the proper term for the way they spend their nights. There's probably no bed either. There is an enormous amount of suffering in our world, and it should bother us if we are going to be loving the whole of creation, not just the people who care about us. **We are supposed to start caring beyond the boundaries that we normally have.**

Our country has been blessed with abundance, and **it's only right for us to share that abundance with other people in the world.** So you can in one step tonight—Eon, this is one idea—you can sign a postcard urging Congress not to cut funding for food in the whole world. There are some who want to do this, and it would be a terrible shame.