

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

Pastor – Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Victoria, BC, Canada

Hate and retaliation are deeply rooted in the world around us. Sara Farizan, an American writer wrote in her book *Here to Stay*: "... hate just doesn't touch the intended target, it spreads to every person who witnesses it." (Farizan, Sara, 2018, Sep. 18, Massachusetts) The feeling of hatred will circulate from one person to another and will destroy the grace and joy within us. St. Paul reminds us, as Christians we are all called to put on Jesus, the Heavenly Adam. St. Paul also presents us with two kinds of life: one ruled by the earthly spirit, and the other, by the divine spirit. Being in the group of the *Last Adam*, the life-giving spirit, we are called to be Christ's witnesses. Jesus wants to have a life in us that loves everyone, as Jesus loves; even the enemies. Today's Readings help us to ponder about how our life may be; if are we following the first Adam of earth, or the second Adam from Heaven.

In the book of Genesis, we read the story of Cain and Lamech who followed the earthly spirit. The story illustrates the consequences of sin and earthly ambitions such as vengeance, retaliation, and separation from God. When the earthly spirit, the spirit of the First Adam rules our life, life is completely controlled by evil intentions and negative traits. St. Paul exhorts, we have borne the image of the man of dust, so we should also bear the image of the Man of Heaven.

From the First Reading, the story of David helps us to understand how to handle challenging situations, our so-called enemies, the problems of life that make our life trapped in a terrible situation. The mercy and forgiveness David showed King Saul indeed added a golden feather in David's life. Likewise, when we show mercy and love, we become the true followers of Christ who was merciful and kind.

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us the core of Christian life; a life rooted in love, mercy, and forgiveness. These are a sure means to lead us on the path of holiness. "Love your enemies". This teaching directly opposes the human instinct for vengeance and revenge. Human tendencies tend to repay evil with evil. Jesus calls us to a higher standard. To love our enemies is to transcend our natural inclinations, to reflect the Divine Love that God has for us. By loving our enemies, we imitate God's mercy.

Jesus, however, is not encouraging us to be passive victims of violence. Instead, He is teaching us to break the cycle of retaliation and violence; to demonstrate moral courage and love. Love and mercy are the two great qualities that Jesus teaches us to follow in our life. As St. Paul urges us to do: let's follow the Last Adam, Christ Jesus; and circulate mercy and love through our life.

