

Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time: "And Jesus said: 'Love Thy enemies'"

Hatred kills.

There is nothing earth shaking about that statement. Wars demonstrate this. There are people who hate other people and who do everything they can to eliminate the other people. There are atrocities taking place every day. The innocent, particularly children, die. I've been to London three times, and all three times a bomb went off. This is the result of centuries of hatred between the English and the Irish. But we don't have to go so far to find hatred. People are being attacked on our American highways, in the cities and even in the suburbs all due to hatred. The Klu Klux Klan, Skinheads, and other Fascist orientated groups feed on hatred.

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There two victims of hatred: the person who is physically hurt and the person who hates. The foremost victim of hatred is the person who hates. Hatred transforms a person from a compassionate human being, to a person whose main concern is to seek vengeance on someone who the person feels has wronged them. Life is consumed with the desire for retaliation and reprisal. Maybe this vengeance will not be seen in a physical attack. It very well may result in a verbal attack or a destruction of another person's reputation. The fact is that the person who hates has transformed his or her life. This person cannot be the loving person Christ called him or her to be.

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If God is love, than how can a Christian hate? The Christian who hates is sacrificing Christianity for the sake of the hate. Again, the Christian who hates is the first victim of hate.

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"But, Father", you say, "I have really been treated poorly by my ex husband or wife, by my sister in law or brother in law. Every meeting is a battle with all sorts of nasty things emanating from this person I am supposed to love. How am I supposed to handle these situation?" Well, we have got to let go of the past. We cannot let the past destroy us. We can still love those who have hurt us. In fact, we have to love them. Perhaps it was with tongue in cheek that St. Paul tells us and the Romans to love our enemies because it will drive them crazy: "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." (Romans 12:20). What drives them crazy is that it is difficult to respond to kindness with nastiness. Many will continue to try to be nasty, but it isn't easy.

Still, the call to love those who hurt us does not mean that we should seek their company so we can endure further hurt. Sometimes it is just the best thing to have less

contact with someone who has caused us bad feelings. The important thing is that we limit our contact not to hurt the other person, but to control the feelings within us which can lead to the destruction of our own lives through hatred.

We cannot let hatred kill us.