

## Homily **7th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year C** (24.2.19)

A very hard gospel. And, you know, one of my favourite saints is the only saint I know, the only person I know that obeyed every command of Jesus. I'm reading his biography at the moment by Bishop Mormon, somebody gave me the book at Christmas because I'd read it 40 years ago. This saint is the only saint I know who has put every word, including that gospel there, into practice. He used to get insulted and all sorts and used to bless people and that is Saint Francis of Assisi.

And the first section I think probably is what I call Hebrew exaggeration to emphasize the generosity of a person. But it does, the whole of that gospel, promote to us a certain Christian ethic which is different to everything else. It's a positive ethic, because most of the Old Testament and most other moral masters who spoke on these things, often spoke in the negative. Don't do this. Don't treat others as you wouldn't want to be treated yourself and so on. It was always in the negative, very rarely in the positive. Not doing things.

But Jesus gives us a golden rule for Christians. 'Do to others', it puts it in the positive, that in other words, 'do to others as we would have done to us'. So it's not about refraining from bad things, but in actively doing good things. And so this love of enemies, for example, I think about all other loves of any kind, love of a spouse, love of children, love of friends. These are natural loves and come from the heart. In one sense you can't help them. They just flow from your connection with other people. But this love, love of enemies, is not from the heart. It's from an act of the will. And basically, Jesus is saying

"No matter what the other person is like, we will wish and strive for their highest good."

And I think that's nigh impossible, but not totally impossible.

And then he goes further and he says an extra thing. Jesus describes normal good behaviour, for example lending to friends with the hope of return and so on. He gives a list there. And basically he says

"What's special about that?"

Even sinners do it. Don't expect any thanks because you've been generous to those who love you. He says we must be like God in our attitude who let's his rain fall on the just and the unjust alike. That God looks on everyone and seeks their fulfilment. And we must do the same.

And then he concludes with that lovely text. The amount you measure out is the amount you will get back. That in other words, it's weighed and it'll be the reward we get back. And to misquote Shakespeare, 'it's measure for measure'.