

Exploring the Gospel

A Religious Education Resource for Parishes

Notes for Catechists

In 1980, riots filled the streets of San Salvador. Archbishop Oscar Romero was shot as he delivered a sermon demanding human rights for his people. As he lay dying, his prayer was one of forgiveness for his enemies. We have only to look through history to know the many people who, like Archbishop Romero, imitated the life and words of Jesus on the cross: "*Father, forgive them.*"

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us clearly that we are not only to pray for our enemies but to offer greetings to them as well. It's easy isn't it, to love those who love us. But what of those who persecute, ridicule and reject us? Here is the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, here is the ultimate demand: **LOVE**. To love is to be daily faithful to God's will. To love is to imitate God's love. It is overwhelming to even consider that we are capable of loving others and loving them as God loves. But in the Old Testament, "*Be holy for I the Lord your God am holy.*" and in the New Testament, "*Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,*" we are reassured.

To journey toward perfection is to be faithful to God's will and to love his people. It is to be slow to anger, to offer compassion, to be rich in mercy. It is to be a spontaneous giver, to walk an extra mile, to reach out to those who have turned their backs on us. To do these difficult and demanding things, to love as Jesus loves, is to become a sign that the kingdom of God has indeed broken into our world. Love and be that sign.

Catechist Reflection....



On How to Be Treated by Others

*an extract from **The Peace of Jesus***

by Joseph G Donders

- What are the demands of today's gospel? Are they easy, difficult?
- What are the demands of your school, work, family, of being a Catechist?

When someone demands my best, I

I find it hard to offer love to

It is hard / easy for me to forgive my enemies because



"Kia inu kau ahau,
If I could just drink"

Te Pu Akonga Whakapono Katorika ki Tamaki

Religious Education Team

Catholic Diocese of Auckland

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Suggested Approach with Children

Aim to explore what it means to love one another, including our enemies, as God through Jesus, has asked us to do.

RESOURCE COMMANDMENT POSTER FROM LAST WEEK



Feeling into...

Recap from last week "God's Laws" (Matthew 5: 17-37)

- What did we learn from this gospel?
- A question on one of the worksheets last week asked what the two greatest commandments are. Do you know?

Jesus tells us they are Love of God and Love of Neighbour (Matthew 22: 36-38)

- Who is our neighbour?
- Is it easy to love everyonewhy/why not?

There are some people we can find very difficult to like, perhaps they think that about us too!

- What about people who hurt us should we try to forgive and love them too?
- Do you think it is important to forgive?

Meeting with.....

In the gospel today Jesus tells us we should forgive and love even those who hurt us. Listen to what he says

Prayer....

Lord Jesus, you once said,
"I leave you my peace,
my peace I give you."
May our hands reach out
to share your peace with others,
and may our hearts always be filled
with forgiveness and love.

AMEN

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.....

adapted for children

One day Jesus said:

"If someone hits you, do not hit them back;
instead you must forgive them and try to be
their friend.

Learn to love your enemies and to pray for
anyone who wishes you harm.

It is easy to love someone who loves you back,
but it is hard to love someone who hurts you.

Try to be like God our Father, who always forgives.
If you do this others will see God's goodness in you,
and my father in heaven will be very pleased."



Responding to.....

- What did you hear? What does Jesus ask us to do?

Jesus says: *If someone hits you, do not hit them back;
instead you must forgive them and try to be their friend.*

- What do you think about that? Is it something you would find easy to do?
- Why/why not?
- What do you think would happen if everyone did as Jesus asked.If there were no arguments, no fights, no name calling, no bullying.....what would the world be like?

Of course its not just about peopleanger and unforgiveness can also lead countries into war.

All over the world there are nations who are enemies and their people are at war.

There are also a lot of people trying to bring peace to these countries, encouraging them toward understanding and friendship with each other, Just as Jesus wanted.

- Can we be peacemakers?

In our own small way we too can be peacemakers by...

being friendly to everyone we meet

learning to forgive and asking for forgiveness when we are in the wrong.

At the end of today's gospel it says ...

*"If you do this others will see God's goodness in you,
and my father in heaven will be very pleased."*

- What will **YOU** do this week?

Catechist Reflection....

On How to Be Treated by Others

*an extract from **The Peace of Jesus***

by Joseph G Donders

It is the sermon on the mountain
that continues in the gospel today.
The sermon that according to scholars
and saints alike
is really
the heart of Jesus' message.

You remember
that we were told last week
not to treat each other
like things.

You remember
how the reducing of others
to the state of things or animals,
chicks or cockroaches,
cannot but lead to
disasters in our human relations.

Today,
advice seems to be given
by Jesus
on how we should treat those
who handle us
as things,
as commodities.

It is about those
who take our eyes
and our teeth;
it is about those
who hit us,
who take our shirts and pants,
it is about those
who order us to accompany them,
who want our money and even
our lives.

At first sight
the attitudes Jesus asks from us
are very baffling:
he tells us
not to offer resistance,
he tells us
not to take revenge,
he tells us
to turn our cheek,
he tells us
to lend out what we have,
he tells us
to go even further
than people force us to go with them.

It is as if he invites us
to be meek
and humble
and naïve.

It is as if he invites us
to be passive
and stupid:
doormats over which
the whole rest of humanity
can walk without difficulty.
It is as if he preaches
a kind of slave mentality
in which we should not mind at all
to be exploited by others,
passive and inert before
Injustice.

Some time ago
in a meeting of our
Justice and Peace Committee
someone told about a priest
in Kenya who had said
that he could not
understand anymore how he
could have preached
that kind of passivity
for so very long,
that kind of submission
In which misery is tolerated
in the name of the gospel.

He had discovered
that it is not true
that Jesus preaches that type
of passivity.
It is true
that he preaches non-violence,
but is not true
that he preaches we should be
like doormats.

It is in his own life
that we can find the interpretation
of what he wanted to say.

He said:

"If anyone hits you
on the right cheek
offer him your left one."

But when he is hit,
after his arrest, according to John,
he did not turn his other cheek,
But he said to his attacker,
challenging him:

"If what I said was wrong,
tell me,
if it was right
why did you hit me?"

(John 18:22-23)

In fact that kind of attitude seems to be the exact point of that whole statement on those cheeks.

Did you ever realize how strange that saying is? If I hit someone in his face I will normally hit him on his left cheek.

It is difficult to hit someone on his right cheek. We can only do that with our left hand or with the back of our right hand.

If you would give someone a slap in their face wouldn't you hit them on their left cheek too?

When we hit someone on his right cheek with the back of our right hand our slap cannot be very hard.

If we do it, it is always a sign of disdain, of disrespect, of scorn, of contempt: "bah, poo, who are you?"

That is what such a slap meant among the Jews too.

It is then, knowing this that we can understand what Jesus meant:

"If anyone hits you on your right cheek, offer your left cheek, challenge your attacker, let them justify themselves, don't accept to be treated as an object of contempt, as a thing, just like that."

And that is what he did when he was hit on his right cheek, asking for a justification. It is in that way that we should respond

working at their change-over, working at their conversion.

Being a doormat does not serve any purpose. Being a doormat is not going to help. A doormat does not care.

And we should care for ourselves, but also for those others who mistreat us.

If we love our enemies as we love ourselves then we should hope for their change-over, for their conversion. If we love our enemies then we have to challenge them in view of their and our *salvation*.

For personal / group reflection

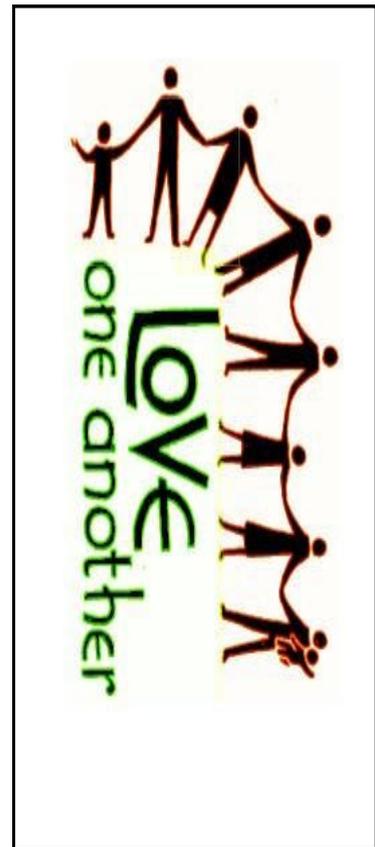
- Read (re-read) Matthew 5: 38-48
- Share thoughts, insights you may have on Donders reflection of Matthew 5: 38-48
- Has your understanding of this scripture been challenged / changed in any way
- Is there something you can start doing now/today to begin living this gospel in a new way?

My / our prayer today is



BADGES TO MAKE

Photocopy on to heavier paper or card.
Stick a safety pin to the back or use a
small punch and thread ribbon through.



ALL LEVELS

