

**Homily – Mass with Charismatic Renewal Group  
St. Mary Magdalene – March 4, 2023**

Moses offers us a very appropriate reflection for Lent in the First Reading: The Lord, whom you have promised to follow, commands you to abide by certain norms. However, in the Gospel, Jesus proposes a radical new lifestyle. He reveals to us who we truly are through the behavior he expects from us. At the same time, He reveals who God is. He asks us to love, but with a love that is the closest to God's own love. There is no room left for us to keep any enemies. We are expected to love with the Holy Spirit.

Doing good to those who hate us!? Praying for those who persecute and slander us!? Seriously!? The bar is too high for us, but the challenge begins by recognizing that God has loved us precisely in that way. Through sin, we have turned ourselves into God's enemies. We have crucified the Son of God. He lays down his life of his own accord because he wants to reveal to us the deepest secret of his heart: his infinite mercy. So, his expectation is that we practice the same mercy that we have received. And the only reason He demands such perfection from us is to allow us to receive such immense love.

Can we do that? We cannot! We need help! Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to love beyond any resentment or prejudice. Only He can enter our hearts from within to help us practice God's transformative and saving love. That is why the Lord requires us to love deeply, that is, from the heart. God's love marginalizes no one. It knows no borders and it is unstoppable. Jesus wants us to love as he

loves, so that we can be like him, and like his Father, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

If we do not forgive, if we do not love everyone without exception, the Kingdom will not be established in our hearts, in our families, in our communities. Following rules and laws is fine, but that can only get us so far. That will not allow us to bear fruit. What fruit? The fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.

“A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit.” (Lk 6:43-44). The fruits of the Holy Spirit reveal that the one who bears them is a son of God. So, let us pray fervently for the Holy Spirit to help us experience the love of the Father, so that we may be convinced from within to be compassionate, good, loving, perfect, after Jesus’ own Heart.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, help us feel the tenderness of your embrace, so that we may be able to embrace others in the same way.