

**Homily – Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
San Fernando Cathedral – February 20, 2022**

According to the Law of Moses, “Whoever strikes someone a mortal blow must be put to death.” If injury results when men have a fight, “you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth...” (Ex 21:12.23-24). The law of retaliation was a great improvement we owe the Babylonian civilization – even predating Moses – as it prevented feuds and vendettas, allowing for the development of larger and more prosperous societies.

But offering the other cheek to the person who strikes you!? Loving your enemies and doing good to them!? *If you know anyone who lends expecting nothing back, please let me know!* Jesus seems to go too far. But He is announcing the coming of his Kingdom, and at the same time he is telling the price of the ticket. Can anyone afford that much? Only He can. But the rest of us must follow, as He also paid for our ticket.

He is teaching his disciples what the requirements are to keep following him. The only antidote to the cancer of hatred, fear, and violence in society is for missionary disciples of the risen Lord to respond appropriately when they are harmed. We are not to react with anger, seeking revenge. We are to live out the principles of the kingdom of God – love, forgiveness, generosity, and respect for truth.

Admittedly, this is very difficult – especially when one is the victim of discrimination, abuse, or violence. But the Golden Rule is at the heart of today’s gospel. It may not be easy to live this way, but

parents have a wonderful opportunity to raise their children in accord with the biblical mandate to treat others as we want to be treated ourselves, being generous in helping others while expecting no payment or recompense in return. Consider the alternative: treating others the way we ourselves do not want to be treated!

The first reading gives us a good example. King Saul was very jealous of David and had tried to kill him. David fled into the wilderness where Saul followed him with his army. When David had a good opportunity to kill the king, he refused. He said that God will reward each person for his or her justice and faithfulness. While man-made laws require certain minimum standards, God's law requires perfect unreserved love. David is subject to a higher bar than the general expectation. He is aware that he is subject to God. He is faithful to the anointment that the king received by God's command. He would receive it later.

Living by the Golden Rule can go a long way to bring healing, reconciliation, and harmony to our current divisiveness, polarization, and lack of willingness to compromise for the common good. Living by the Golden Rule serves the common good and builds up the Kingdom of God. St. Paul challenges us to bear the image of Jesus, not Adam. To say Yes to God and No to violence.

Our Lady is with us always, as she promised. She brought together two peoples in this hemisphere, uniting people with a rich background of diversity. Blessed Mother of Guadalupe, show us the way to be true missionary disciples!