

## **February 23, 2020 – 7th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Cycle A**

The Year 1989 saw the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Germany. This wall was the barrier that divided the nation from 1961 to 1989.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, there would have been, perhaps, no person in all of East Germany, who was more hated ...

... than the former Communist dictator Erich Honecker.

(Being the secretary of the Communist Party, Erich Honecker was the prime organizer of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and, in this function, bore responsibility for the "order to fire" along the inner German border.)

However, after the collapse of the wall, Honecker had been stripped of all his offices.

Kicked out of his villa, the new government refused him and his family, new housing.

The family of the Honeckers were became homeless and destitute.

It was at this stage, Pastor Uwe Holmer, Director of a Christian Help Centre decided to take a bold step:

Feeling that it would be wrong to give them a room, in the Help Centre, which was meant for even needier people...

... Uwe Holmer decided to take the family of the Honeckers into their own home!

Holmer's children had suffered the wrath of the rule of the Honeckers..

8 of his children had been turned down for higher education, due to their discriminatory policies.

But now, Holmer - filled with God's Mercy - decided to care and accept their personal enemy - and perhaps one of the most hated men in Germany!

Many people turned against Holmer for his decision  
Many felt angered in having given refuge to an enemy

But Holmer, the Christian, was convinced of what he was doing...

It was indeed an unnatural move...

It was undoubtedly an unconventional step...

.. But it was so much Christ-like!

He put into practice what Jesus had taught on the Sermon of the Mount, as we see in today's Gospel:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..." (Mt 5:44)

It is said that some books/thoughts are to be just tasted...

Some are to be just swallowed...

While some others are to be chewed and digested!

Well... here is a teaching that is certainly not too easy to digest:

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you!"

Sometimes when we hear the word ENEMY...

Our thoughts go to some enemy of the nation or some social criminal...

Or perhaps, some of us may think of some person who has harmed us deeply or cheated us, and has turned to be an enemy...

But if we analyze our lives closer... we may observe that we all have many enemies in our lives..

An 'enemy', is defined by the Oxford Dictionary, as "a person or thing, hostile or opposed to something; that harms or weakens someone/something"

A little closer look into our lives will probably make us to discover that...

Perhaps, many people fall into this definition of being an "enemy"...

... Many in our family or our community

... Many in our friends circle

... Many in our workplaces

... Many in the society

We get so easily offended when our egos are hurt..

We feel a sense of resentment when we are not treated as we feel we ought to be...

We experience bitterness when other people do not fall in line with the way we think...

... there are often so many struggles and mental games...

... and we have so often grudges against all these people!

All these are our "enemies"!

This list of enemies in our life..though apparently unnoticed, is perhaps deeper....

But, today the Lord says: "Love those enemies..and pray for them"!

Humanly speaking, of course, it seems only a theoretical advice - seemingly impractical!

But the Lord wants us to be perfect!

We also know one thing...

... If this was not possible, the Lord would have never said it!

The Life of Jesus Himself was a proof for it...

... Lovingly inviting even all those who hated, to experience His Love

... Constantly reaching out with the call of repentance, to those who persecuted Him

... Giving His life for all of us, who offend and hurt Him

The call of the Gospel "to love our enemies" is a high demand...

It is indeed a huge challenge...

Yet, with the grace of the Lord...

... Lets pick up this challenge of the Lord...and seek towards perfection!

God reminds us through the book of Leviticus that we are all called to holiness and to extend His love, in service, to our neighbors:

"Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy." (Lev 19:2).

We are to bring to our conscious awareness that "we are the Temple of God's Holy Spirit!" (Cf. 1 Cor 3:16)

St John Paul II says, "Don't fear to be the saints of the Third Millennium!"

Let's not remain in idealistic talks and thoughts...

... rather, lets translate the words and challenges of the Lord, in our practical and daily life.

May we identify the "enemies" in our life...

... and seek Divine Assistance and the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary and the Saints.

May we dare to "receive into our homes" those who, though deserve to be punished, but still are worthy of the Mercy of the Lord!

**St Francis de Sales (SFS) – "The measure of love is to love without measure!"**

Jesus I Trust in you.