

7th Sunday of Ordinary Time - February 23, 2025
Homily by Fr. Erel Villanueva

So as we continue our worship today,
it's the Lord's Day, it's the day where
all the people of God gather together to worship Him,
to give Him praise and thanksgiving.
In this Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time,
the Lord continues to give us
the simple way of everyday living as Christians.
That's why now we are in an ordinary time.
That what we have learned from Advent, Christmas,
all those teachings,
is now a day or a time or a season
to apply it in our daily lives.
Now you could see the practicality
of applying the Word of God
in every situation of our lives.
And last Sunday, He talked about being blessed.
It is a Lukan or a writing of Luke,
Saint Luke, about the Sermon of the Mount.
Like also in Matthew.
And here I have some different way of expressing it.
But the same also meaning
of attitude and character of being as a Christian.
Our everyday lives.
So here, He's talking to us
in a higher level of being blessed.
Last Sunday, He talked about blessed.
Blessed are those whom men hate you
and when they exclude you.
So being blessed.
Like in Matthew 5,
to be also blessed at the Merciful,
blessed at the Pure in Heart,
the Sermon of the Mount.
But the same talking of virtue and message
of our Christian attitude and character
that would always be seen in us everyday.
Wherever we are, in our house,
home, school, work, in a barangay,
this character and attitude should be in us
proclaiming Jesus in our lives.
So today, He is telling us
of a higher level of being blessed.
Not only blessed of finances, material things,
good health, long life,
and the ability to be humble.
But the higher level now of being blessed
is to walk in love.
That is the greatest or the highest level
of being blessed by God,
to walk in love.
That our lives always be inspired
and motivated by love.
Our colleague says,
anything that we do without love is nothing.
Because God is love.
And today, He is talking to us
or He is bringing us now
in a higher level of our faith,
a higher level of love,
and a higher level of being blessed.
To walk in love.

Express in what?
Express in loving our enemies,
doing good to those who hate you,
blessing those who curse you,
and praying for those who spite you.
That is now the highest level of being blessed.
An ability to love your enemies,
those people who hate you.
To do good to those people who don't like you
or doing harm to you.
To bless those who curse you.
And pray for those who use you.
That is the highest form of being blessed.
And it is not easy.
It's hard.
And everyday we encounter that
in school, in our house,
in barangay, in office.
We encounter that.
People sometimes become our enemies.
In what way, what the reason is.
People who hate us,
who curse us,
and despise us.
And because everything that is very natural to do
or happen everyday,
what is more natural now
is how we react to that.
The world, we're all the same with that.
Teeth for teeth, eye for an eye.
But the Lord has given us a reason here.
Not that.
That we should be forgiving when other people do not forgive.
We should be blessing or helping people
when people are selfish and greedy.
We should be people who continue
to doing good to others
in spite of a situation or something
people doing bad to them.
Having that kind of principle
that conquering evil with good.
This is everyday life.
But that doesn't mean also
there's the other side of this.
It's not because we have this kind of virtue
that when a thief or robber comes to your house,
open the door and get everything in the house.
Or somebody would take your house and lot and land
and expel you.
That's not what we're talking here.
But those things that everyday we experience
and we face with other people.
And here the Lord is exciting us
able to respond in God's way.
To love those who hate us.
To do good to those who hate us and use us.
To bless us and curse us
and pray for those who despise us.
And this is something which is I would say
hard to do.
Or impossible.
Because God says also
it's easy to do good to those who are good to us.
It's easy to be kind to those who are kind to us.

But God Lord is giving us
bringing us a higher level now of faith
to use our faith
to love people, those unlovable.
To forgive people who have hurt us.
I don't know what they have done to us.
Maybe of their immaturity.
Maybe of their selfishness.
Maybe of their greed.
Or being bad.
But whatever it is, still our response is
we have to forgive.
And that is the highest form of being blessed.
Learning to walk in love.
So, we are blessed.
Yes, we are blessed.
Truly we are blessed people.
Not only materially, physically, spiritually.
But also blessed
to walk in love.
To forgive those who have hurt us.
To pray for those who desperately use us.
To bless those who are cursing us.
And to do good to those people
even they are not good.
Not even they are deserving to do.
So once again here brothers and sisters
it takes faith to do this.
To forgive people that hurt us.
To do good to those people
we don't like or being bad.
Sometimes we pray.
If we hear somebody who died
because they are good.
Ay, sayang.
They are good.
But if we hear somebody who died
because they are not good or bad.
Ay, thank you Lord.
Sometimes that is our reaction.
But God says walk in love.
And how we could do this?
First of all, it's a matter of choice and freedom.
And that's the thing that the Lord has given to you and me.
The power to choose.
To forgive or not to forgive.
To do good to those who are not good unto us or not.
It's a matter of choice.
And it's also our freedom to do it.
Nobody hinders us not to do it.
It's a matter of decision to do it or not.
To forgive or not.
To pray for those people.
To do good to those people.
It's a matter of choice.
But praise God made me that we choose to pray for them.
We choose to do good for them.
We choose to forgive them.
Because if not, if not, it's also in our disadvantage.
Because first of all, we disobey God.
We also inflict ourselves.
We inflict ourselves.
And thirdly also, blessings.
The blessings will not come unto us.

Because it is hindered.
It is hindered by our unforgiveness.
Our hatred.
And even your health is affected.
Your relationship with other people is affected.
Your work is affected.
Your family is affected.
If we don't choose to forgive.
And obey God.
So, it's a matter of choice.
And how we do this?
First of all, we have to think.
To love our enemies.
To do good to those who hate us.
To bless those who curse us.
And to pray to those who displease us.
It's not easy.
And it cannot be done by our own strength.
We need the power of God.
We need the Holy Spirit.
It's not because of our own will.
Or because we are strong-willed people.
No.
It is limited.
We need God to help us.
We need God to help us.
We have to increase our faith.
To develop our faith.
As the Holy Spirit said, only the Holy Spirit could do this.
Because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is said in Galatians.
The fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians says here.
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
Against us, there is no law.
So, it's the Holy Spirit who helps us to do this.
So, it will help us now to remember that we need the Holy Spirit.
We need the Word of God.
You cannot do it on your own.
To forgive is to forgive these people who hate you.
Because this hate or whatever things inside of us, eating us, is a force.
A force itself.
That nothing could contain it except the power of God.
Because if not, this hatred, this unforgiveness will eat you up.
It will eat you up.
And again, it will always be in our own disadvantage.
And that is not to be blessed.
You are not blessed.
Maybe we are blessed materially, physically.
But in overall, you are not blessed.
Because you are not able to forgive.
You are not able to pray for these people.
So, you have to release.
Forgiving is releasing them.
In your mind and heart.
And also release yourself.
Because if there is unforgiveness in our heart, hatred in our heart,
see, we have created our own cell.
We are prisoners of that.
And it controls us.
So, we need to release.
We need to forgive.
And we can do that by the help of the Holy Spirit.
So, we have to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit.
Continue to submit ourselves with the Word of God.

Because only God could help us.
We could pray for them.
We could do good to them.
Because it is not really, you know and I know it,
it's not really convenient or feeling good to do these things.
Those people have done bad things to us.
But God says, you have to forgive them.
Do good to those.
So, first, we have to submit to the Holy Spirit.
That He will allow us to bear fruit of that loving kindness of being forgiving
in us.
Only the Holy Spirit could do that.
And secondly, we have to grow in love.
To grow in love.
Magpanubu kita sa gugma.
Sa gugma't Diyos.
Because only the love of God could melt those hatred.
Those unforgiveness are only the love of God.
And it says here in Ephesians.
In Philippians.
In Philippians chapter 1 verse 9.
This is the prayer of Saint Paul.
He said, this I pray that your love may abound till more and more in knowledge
and all discernment.
He prayed for the people in Philippians.
That their love would grow.
Love would grow.
That you may approve the things that are excellent.
Excellent.
That you may be sincere and without offense to the day of Christ.
Being filled with the fruit.
Fruit of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.
Where the glory of God and praise of God.
This I pray that you may grow in love.
To grow.
Because that's the only way we learn to forgive.
That's the only way we learn to pray for those people who despise Jesus.
To bless us, curse us.
And to do good to those things.
Those people that have done bad things to us.
Only the love of God.
If I have to read it in Amplified.
I wrote it here.
In Amplified.
It says here.
I pray that your love would grow.
Yet more and more.
Fulfilling in its field development.
It is in full development in knowledge and of insight.
It means that your love may display itself.
Display itself in our action.
Display itself in the greatest depth of acquaintances and of discernment.
Display.
So love is displaying itself to us.
Through our forgiveness.
Through our doing good to those who hate us.
Blessing those who curse us.
And praying for those who despise and use us.
You see.
With that love.
Instead of praying for their downfall, you pray, Lord, bless them.
Or having faith in God, Lord, you are the one who created them, fixed them.
Only God could change them.
Not us.

Only God.
Hatred breeds more hatred.
It's only God.
Only God could change them.
And we have to grow in love.
And how we do grow in love?
Continue to read the word of God.
Read the love letter of God.
This is the love letter of God to you and me.
And you would see here and know here that the love of God, that he had forgiven
you and me.
He had forgiven you or me for being not forgiving to other people.
And it said here, you learn to be merciful.
Merciful.
Because God is also merciful to us.
How we pray for those people doing bad, Lord, sometimes we pray for that.
Because they're doing something bad.
Have you put in your mind you're also doing bad?
If you're praying that God would send them, strike them with lightning because
they're doing bad, what about you and me?
When we do bad, Lord, patawa.
But when other people do bad, Lord, send them lightning.
Extreme justice that you want.
Learn to love.
This is, I would say, hard to do.
I know it.
But it's a matter of decision.
Lord, I have to forgive.
Lord, I have to forgive.
Lord, I forgive.
That's what I'm doing, Lord.
I am forgiving.
I'm like crazy man that always says, I speak to myself, Lord, I just forgive.
I just forgive, Lord.
I just forgive.
Because if not, my mind and my heart is so angry that, you know, I think of bad
things to those people.
Lord, I just forgive.
I just forgive, Lord.
I just forgive.
Now every time, sometimes, you already forget it.
That's the thing you really know if you're already forgiven that person.
Because when somebody talks about what he has done to you,
and he said, when you heard somebody talk about what other people have done to
you,
and you get angry again, you have not forgiven.
You have not buried the hatchet, as they said.
Buried the hatchet.
Yes, I forgave them.
I reburied the hatchet.
But,
Anytime.
Because if truly it is forgiven, in your cellphone, it is deleted.
Deleted already.
If not, it's just stored.
It's just stored.
Anytime, some pin dot, it will return, right?
Our cellphone.
Our mind is the same.
If you have the need to forgive, delete it.
Delete it.
Don't make it just stored.
Anytime, some pin dot, it will return.
Then, you will get angry again.

Get angry again.
It means to say, you have not really forgiven.
But we have to.
We have to.
We have to.
That's why we have to grow in love.
Reading the word of God.
Read the love letter of God.
How He loves you.
And they said, be merciful, as your Father is merciful.
But God will remember that God is merciful to us.
So, Francis, it's not easy, but not impossible.
We need the love of God.
We need the Holy Spirit.
And that's the way, truly, to live as a Christian.
Because in so doing, you're also telling them, as I said, the golden rule.
If you treat them like that, that's also what you want them to treat you.
At the same time, we proclaim the glory of God in our lives.
So, we need the Holy Spirit.
We need the word of God.
To be able to walk in love.
To forgive.
To love those enemies.
To do good to those people who don't like or have done bad to us.
To bless those who curse us.
And pray for those who displease us.
I said again, it's not easy, but not impossible with God.
While I'm studying this, I came across a letter.
I came across a letter that really would say that it's not impossible.
It's possible.
A letter of a Jewish prisoner in Nazi concentration camp.
You know, especially young people, part of history during World War II.
The Germans want to kill all the Jewish people.
That's why most of them were put in the concentration camp.
To suffer, labor camp, and to die there.
And most of them died in a big oven.
These Israeli people, Jewish people.
That's why they call it holocaust.
Have you seen the word holocaust?
It means offering.
Because all of them were put in this big machine.
And to die there.
Burned alive.
And this one letter, this letter was written.
Left in the concentration camp.
Because all of them were already dead.
They died already.
It was shown by US soldiers when they found this letter.
And it's shown that it's also possible.
Kayang gawin to forgive those who have desperately used you and doing bad to you.
So, in my end, it was this.
This is a prayer of a Nazi, of a Jewish man in Nazi death camp in Germany.
And the prayer was scribbled in a scrap of dirty paper.
Sinulat lang at ginaywan.
And he said his prayer.
O Lord, remember not only the men and women of goodwill.
But also those of ill will.
But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted upon us.
Remember the fruits we brought thanks to this suffering.
Our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility and the courage and the generosity.
The grace of heart has grown out of this.
And when they come to judgment, let all the faults which we have borne be their forgiveness.

He had forgiven those Nazi German people who have inflicted.
Killed them, burned them alive.
It's easy.
Not easy, but they learned to forgive.
It is the heart born of the love of God.
Able to forgive those people who have done wrong to us.
And it proclaims matter once again of the glory of God in our life.
And it's a matter of choice and decision.
May it be that we choose to walk in love.
Please stand.