

## **Monday Week 11 of Ordinary Time**

### **Gospel: Mt. 5:38-42**

#### **Collect**

O God, strength of those who hope in you,  
graciously hear our pleas,  
and, since without you, mortal frailty can do nothing,  
grant us always the help of your grace,  
that in following your commands  
we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.

As the collect begins – God is our strength! He is our hope and by His grace we can follow in the way of peace and reconciliation. Revenge is the complete opposite, and in the Gospel Jesus teaches us that His way is not revengeful. Each time we pray the Lord's Prayer we are asking our heavenly Father to forgive us AS we forgive others. Jesus underlines these words by adding, “If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses” (Mt. 6:15). By His grace we can forgive those who hurt us.

Certain cultural situations escape us in today's Gospel. First of all, to be hit on the right cheek, the assailant would have to either backhand you, since only the right hand could be used (the left hand was used for unclean activities), or hit you with his fist. Fists were used between equals; backhanding was done to inferiors. Therefore, once backhanded, if you stood your ground and turned the other cheek, you are showing your dignity and saying “hit me as an equal” (which no master would do to his servant or child).

On giving your cloak as well as tunic... that was all poor people had to wear. It was not scandalous to be naked, but it was scandalous to look upon a naked person. Offering all your clothing shows that you are keeping your dignity and putting your assailant in a compromising situation.

On going an extra mile, the occupying Romans could command locals to carry their packs for one mile only; any more and the soldier risked punishment. Going beyond the legal limit, you put yourself in control and refuse to behave as a victim. The soldier risks punishment if you carry on!

So how to translate this to our modern world. We have received God's grace in Baptism and in the other sacraments. By His grace alone we can begin to forgive others. Forgiving is not easy and comes in stages. The first stage is to want to forgive. First, we must ask the Holy Spirit for the grace to want to forgive. Secondly, we have to pray for the person(s) who has/have hurt us. Ask Jesus to bless them as human beings, for He loves them as much as He loves us. Then, every time we are reminded of the hurt, if we repeat these two actions, slowly, very slowly, we find that we are letting go of the hurt. Our Lord Jesus Christ asked His Father to forgive His crucifiers (Lk. 23:34) and united to Him as His Body, the Church, we can do the same.