

## Tuesday Reflection 02 March 2021

### *ENEMIES*

At last Saturday's meeting of the Angelus Group there was a deep and lively reflection on Jesus' commandment that we should "love our enemies". Among the questions posed were "who is my enemy?", "how do they become my enemy?" and "what part do I play in making enemies?". The big question, however, is "*How* do I love my enemy?".

Perhaps the story of St Francis and the wolf can help us.

You might know the story, of how the people of the Italian town of Gubbio, terrorised by a wolf which killed their sheep, attacked their shepherds and carried off their children, in desperation called on St Francis to help them, how Francis went out and made peace between the wolf and the citizens of the town by helping both sides understand the needs of the other - the need of the people for security and the need of the wolf for food - and showing how the needs of both parties could be met in peace and harmony. He helped the people and the wolf to replace confrontation with cooperation.

The story fulfils the prophecy of Isaiah (65:25) "The wolf and the lamb will graze together ... No-one shall hurt or destroy on my holy mountain."

The moral of the story is summed up in four lines by the poet Edwin Markham:

He drew a circle and shut me out -  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win.  
We drew a circle and took him in.

What this is perhaps telling us is that happiness in this world comes from thinking about others, and suffering comes from preoccupation with yourself.

**Michael Townson**