

Reflection for Saturday 27 February

The Gospel reading at this morning's Mass forms part of Jesus's sermon on the mount as recorded by St Matthew. The passage ends with the verse, "You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect." That verse sums up what Jesus is teaching in the rest of the passage.

This morning's Gospel is about how we should live and the attitude we should have towards other people. Jesus begins by saying that his hearers would have been brought up to love their neighbour. By neighbour they would have understood it to mean their fellow-Jews, or those living near, or those congenial to themselves. Any others would have been considered to be enemies and should be hated, although there is no explicit reference in the Old Testament commanding the hatred of enemies. There are however feelings of hatred towards the nation's enemies in the Book of Deuteronomy and the Psalms but not personal enemies.

Jesus is saying that God is a God of love and that love embraces the good and the bad. To illustrate the point Jesus says that God causes the sun to rise on the bad as well as the good and the rain to fall on the honest and dishonest alike. If we are going to be true followers of Jesus then we have to love our enemies and persecutors, because God loves them as much as he loves us. It's easy to love those who love us and those we like and are our friends even non believers do that. We must love those we don't like and go the extra mile for them if necessary. We should pray for them as well.

Now we come to the last verse in the passage I quoted at the beginning of my reflection. God is perfect love and Jesus shows by his words and actions what that perfect love is. By living that way is to fulfil God's Law. That should be our aim and we should work towards it by the help of God's grace. We cannot do it alone. Lent is a good time for us to see how we are doing. Please read St Matthew chapter 5 vs 43-48 the reference to this morning's Gospel reading.

Perhaps there's somebody we don't get on with or fallen out of friendship with them. Now's the time for us to make amends.