

The Reflection from Pastor Fr. John Carlos, Holy Cross Church, Harrison, NJ, February 23, 2020

LOVE!

The central theme in this Sunday's Word is that of love, expressed in its various synonyms. Both in negative and positive formulations. In a negative way: "You shall not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart"; "Take no revenge and cherish no grudge" (1st reading). On the positive side: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (1st reading); "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Gospel). Between the two formulations or movements of the theme, there is the model of God's being and acting, motivating and encouraging: "Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy" (1st reading); "The Lord is kind and merciful. He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion. Merciful and gracious is the LORD, slow to anger and abounding in kindness." (Responsorial Psalm). And to conclude: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Gospel).

Following the updating of the old Law, initiated in last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus, in today's Gospel, opposes the OT law of vengeance "*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*", to the well-known NT attitude: "When someone strikes you on your right cheek turn the other one as well"; to the saying "*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy*", the added mandate: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you". Along the way, he takes the opportunity to say that loving ones friends and greeting ones brothers is nothing extraordinary, since tax collectors (sinners) and pagans also do the same (Gospel).

And we, continue judging ourselves to be very good Christians, with our little hatreds or reserving affection ...!

United with you in mission, I am your servant and friend,

Father John Carlos