

# 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year A

*But I say to you:  
offer the wicked man no resistance. (Mt 5:39)*



## First Reading

*Leviticus 19:1-2.17-18*

The Lord spoke to Moses; he said: "Speak to the whole community of the sons of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.'

You must not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. You must openly tell him, your neighbour, of this offence; this way you will not take a sin upon yourself. You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord."

## Second Reading

*1 Corinthians 3:16-23*

Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple.

Make no mistake about it: if any one of you think of himself as wise, in the ordinary sense of the word, then he must learn to be a fool before he really can be wise. Why? Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As scripture says: The Lord knows wise men's thoughts: he knows how useless they are, or again: God is not convinced by the arguments of the wise. So there is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect."

## Meditation

*Today's gospel shows the new Moses preaching the fulfilment of the Law. His words, spoken with authority, define the faith lived by Christians.*

*The gospel moves us beyond the ancient law of retaliation. While that law seems harsh to us today, in its own day it marked progress over the growing anarchy of individual revenge. At the time of Jesus, the law of retaliation was not applied in its primitive rigour, even though it was maintained in principle. To this day proportionality of punishment to crime is the foundation of penal law. Although this law of retaliation is regarded as legitimate, Jesus challenges it. In opposition to this regulated revenge which always runs the risk of declining into a vicious circle of violence, Jesus preaches that non-resistance which renounces the perpetuation of evil.*

*Jesus goes even further. The Old Testament had already required love of neighbour as one's other self. Neighbour meant one's Jewish compatriot; in its widest extension, it meant the stranger abiding in Israel or the adopted and assimilated immigrant. For Jesus, however, even enemies and persecutors become neighbours. To instinctive hatred Jesus opposes love, a concrete love expressed in hospitality to the stranger and prayer for our persecutors.*

*While some have termed this a utopian or naive style of life, simple observation teaches that a gesture of peace is often more effective than a discussion of peace. A just society is not built on litigation alone, but also upon individuals freely surrendering their just due for the good of another. Long-suffering is the true power of the non-violent. Our frail efforts for justice pale before Jesus, the perfect model of these essential Christian attitudes.*