

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Mar 15th 2014

Jesus challenges us in today's Gospel to strive for the perfection of the children of God, which is to love as God loves – to love all, even our enemies. As I prayed with this scripture, I found myself thinking, "But, I don't have any enemies." I am not a diplomat, nor have I been in a gang, and I have escaped any family feuds. Then, I realized that in many ways, I have created enemies by the barriers I place between others and myself. Sometimes these barriers represent my insecurities about my abilities, my fear of rejection, or my desire to safeguard my reputation.

Although we are all created in God's image and likeness, a people peculiarly God's own – as we hear in today's first reading from Deuteronomy, early in life we all begin to make distinctions between "us" and "them." We often judge ourselves to be more enlightened, more civilized, and more deserving than "those" other people who may be of a different opinion or political leaning, a different background or identity. In so doing, we dehumanize them by building more and more barriers between "us" and "them" to the point where "they" simply become the "enemy."

However, Ignatius describes spiritual consolation as breaking down all barriers, barriers between "us" and "them," and so ultimately between "us" and God. In order to walk in God's ways, we must open our hearts, be vulnerable, and see all as God sees them – as children of God. We must love "them" even when we may disagree with them, even when they seem "undeserving" of our love, even when they may outright reject our love. For this is to love as God loves, it is to love as Jesus loved us upon the cross. Let us pray for the grace to love as God loves this Lent.

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