

June 20, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

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STRENGTH THROUGH LOVE

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt From Today's Gospel

Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

MATTHEW 5:48

Reflection

Today's Gospel from St. Matthew is evocative in its mandate to perfection. What a struggle the drive for perfection has been in my life. At first glance, "perfection" seems righteous and noble. However, striving for perfection that is without defect or flaws is humanly impossible and makes me judgmental, harsh, and cranky. The writer also reports Jesus including love of enemies as part of the challenge. Yikes! Perfection is a very tall order. Humanly speaking, loving enemies seems contrary to ego determination.

The mandate to perfection is carefully nuanced. We are to “be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” Ahh! This changes the definition of perfection for me. God’s greatest gift to me/us is unconditional love and belonging. The ability to love is woven into our spiritual and human DNA, since I am made in the image and likeness of God. I know God as loving, compassionate, and merciful. I have within me what I need to choose love over hatred or vindictiveness. Centering myself in God and prayer and reflection helps me to put ego in check. In relationship with God who is -- first -- love, I can act with gentle strength and great humility and choose what is more loving in any circumstance. It is not easy and yet possible.

The reminder to love my enemies and pray for those who persecute me, offered in Matthew 5:44, is challenging indeed! On a good day, I can brush right by this mandate without much thought. Thanks be to God, I don’t experience having enemies.

Yet, as a child of God and a follower of Jesus, I am asked to love as God loves. Jesus modeled love and compassion in his way of being and relating. Even when faced with hatred and violence, he chose to love, to forgive, and to be steadfast in reflecting God’s own perfection of love. This is costly grace indeed!

Everyone is my dear neighbor and bares a reflection of God in some way. Can I see the likeness even in someone I find annoying or disruptive? Loving as God loves is no easy thing, for God loves unconditionally, freely, and all-inclusively. I ask the Holy Spirit for inspiration and strength to love in the manner of God. I am capable of choosing to do the more loving thing even when confronted with anger, hurt, disillusionment or mistrust. I don’t need to stay in an abusive relationship. I just need to step away from responding in hurtful or vengeful ways. I am invited to pray for the good of the one who hurts me.

On my parents’ tombstone my siblings and I wrote, “***Strength through Love.***” Love is their legacy to us and the witness of their lives over 67 years of marriage.



A cemetery in Rochester, NY
Photo by Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

For Pondering

- What is my capacity to love?
- What circumstances make it more difficult to act in loving ways?

- For what help, grace, or gift of the Holy One do I pray, so to move through hurt or anger and ultimately act more in love?
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For Prayer

*Come, Holy Spirit: sustain me with the fire of your love.
Pull forth your grace and connect me with your inner wisdom.
Tame my ego and stir up courage that leads to my doing
what is most loving in this relationship and circumstance.
In you all is possible.
Amen.*

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