

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A Readings & Background



	Purpose of this session
Profession of faith – mystery of God	God calls us to holiness (#1970)
Scripture	Matthew 5: 38-48
Church	Parts of the Mass (Sign of Peace)
Sacraments/liturgy	Sacrament of Reconciliation
Christian living/morality	Nonviolence and reconciliation (rather than anger and killing) as a way of dealing with problems Forgiving and being forgiven
Prayer/worship	Prayer of St Francis

**First Reading:** Leviticus 19:1–2, 17–18

Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 103: 1–4, 8, 10, 12–13

Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.

**Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 3:16–23

Are you not aware that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

**Gospel Reading** Matthew 5:38–48

**My command to you is: love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.**

### Background on the Gospel

The last two antitheses offered in the *Sermon on the Mount* deal with love of enemies. We should not look at “*an eye for an eye*” as an inordinately strict punishment. It is actually meant **to limit acts of revenge by making** sure the punishment is not excessive but fits the crime. However, Jesus asks his followers to take a different approach **by resisting retaliation altogether**. The response to a stronger person who slaps us on the cheek, takes us to court, or demands a service of us is not to resist. Similarly, for a weaker person, such as a beggar or borrower, we are to give him or her what he or she asks for. Those who are called to the Kingdom of Heaven are to go **beyond the way the world usually works** and serve God’s kingdom here on earth. The other difficult demand of those who are called to the **kingdom is to embrace the enemy**. There is **no command in the Old Testament to hate individuals** in a personal or vindictive way. But there is a religious stance that **calls one to hate evil and to distance oneself from those who participate in evil**.

In contrast, Matthew emphasizes **that love of God and love of neighbour are the fundamental commands on which all else depend**. Because **God’s love is unconditional**, we are to strive to love as God does, though, of course, it is challenging. Is it even possible?



The key is in the final verse. **We are to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect**. Matthew uses the Greek word *telos*, which is probably better translated here as “**complete**.”

We are not to be perfect as in doing everything correctly, that is, **as in being absolutely morally correct**. We are to be perfect as **in striving to reach the completeness we are called to** in the Kingdom of Heaven. **Attempting to love our enemies is part of striving for that completeness**.

## Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

### Family Connection

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**Gospel Reading** Matthew 5:38–48

My command to you is:

***love your enemies, pray for your persecutors.***

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#### **Family Connection**

Family life teaches us many things. It is often at home that we learn practical skills such as cooking, riding a bike, and making repairs. Talk about some of the things that the members of your family have learned to do at home. We also learn about caring at home. Talk about times when you have learned a lesson about sharing, forgiving, or loving through an experience that happened at home.

Talk about how **love is the most important thing a family can share with one another.**

Explain that it is the same in God's family.

Read aloud this Sunday's Gospel, Matthew 5:38–48.

Talk about how Jesus tried to *teach his disciples how to love others beyond those who are closest to them*. Jesus tells them to love even their enemies. As members of God's family, we are called to do the same thing.

Talk about some concrete ways you can "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"

Remind your children that Jesus does not expect us to be perfect. *Jesus knows that we are human and will not always do everything correctly.*

Explain that what Jesus wants us to do is to love others as if they were Jesus himself. If we reach out in love to others, we are doing exactly what Jesus did. That is what perfection looks like.

End this time together by praying the Act of Love.

#### **Act of Love**

***O my God, I love you above all things with my whole heart and soul, because you are all good and worthy of all my love. I love my neighbour as myself for the love of you. I forgive all who have injured me and I ask pardon of those whom I have injured.***

***Amen.***