



Saturday of the 1st Week of Lent



Date: Saturday, March 15, 2025 | **Season:** Lent | **Year:** C

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:16–19

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8 | **Response:** Psalm 119:1b

Gospel Acclamation: 2 Corinthians 6:2b

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:43–48

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

From the very beginning, God has called His people to be set apart. Not in privilege, not in status, but in holiness.

“You will be a people peculiarly His own, as He promised you.”

Israel was chosen—not to be superior, but to be a light to the nations. To show the world what it means to walk in the way of the Lord. And what does that way look like? The Psalm tells us today:

“Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord.”

But this is no ordinary law. This is not a set of rules for rules’ sake. This is a law written on the heart. A law of love.

And so, in today’s Gospel, Jesus reveals the deepest meaning of that law:

“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.”

Not tolerate them. Not avoid them. Not secretly hope that they get what they deserve. Love them. Will their good. Pray for them.

This is the hardest command of the Gospel. It goes against every natural instinct. But it is the heart of what it means to be a child of God. For as Jesus reminds us, God Himself loves indiscriminately—He “makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.”

And this is not weakness. This is the deepest power. It is the power that changed the world when Christ, hanging on the cross, looked at those who had mocked Him, tortured Him, and crucified Him—and said:

“Father, forgive them.”

If we are to be His followers, this is our path as well. And we are not asked to do this alone. We walk in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, those who have lived this command at great cost.

We might think today of Saint Katharine Drexel, who saw the deep wounds of racism and exclusion in the United States. She did not respond with anger or bitterness. Instead, she built schools, worked for justice, and loved where others hated. Not because it was easy, but because to follow Christ is to love beyond measure.

So today, while we keep Pope Francis in our prayers, we ask ourselves:

- Who in my life do I struggle to love?
- What would it look like for me to truly pray for my enemies—not just in words, but from the heart?
- How can I be a sign of God’s love in a world that so often chooses division over unity? Love is not passive. Love does not ignore injustice. But love is the only force powerful enough to heal what is broken.

And in the end, when we stand before God, He will not ask us if we were successful, if we were powerful, if we were admired. He will ask us one thing:

Did you love as I have loved you?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.