



Virtue of Charity

“Love ... love changes everything”, so a song goes. Love always wins. Because God is Love. Not to believe that, is to fall into the trap of thinking that evil, hatred and violence will have the last word. Never! God has the last word, and God’s word can only be a word of love.

From the perspective of our Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus is indeed God’s “final” word. In raising Jesus from the dead, “God has conquered the last enemy – death”, as St Paul teaches. God’s love overcomes the human hatred and violence that destroyed his beloved Son.

How, in the light of this, is Christian love a virtue? Recall our preliminary remarks on virtue as a cultivated habit of mind and behaviour. So, love is not just a “warm fuzzy feeling”. Love is a decision, a choice, a daily practice. It is a choice to respond counter-intuitively to experiences of rudeness, cruelty and any number of despicable vices in others. “Turning the other cheek” applies here. Instinctively we want to hit back. The virtue of love takes a broader, more considered view. How so?

It might help to understand the actual meaning of Jesus words about turning the other cheek. Ironically this has nothing to do with being passive or timid as a mouse. It is, rather, a form of asserting one’s dignity and, in the process, cutting one’s aggressor down to size – a kind of “tough love” if you like. The historical context in which Jesus uttered those words was the Roman occupation of his homeland. Jesus knew that a Roman soldier would always

have had to keep free the hand he uses to draw his sword. He could therefore only strike a local citizen or a slave with the back of the other hand. “Turning the other cheek”

would have required him to slap with the palm of the same hand – but that was considered a sign of childish weakness! He couldn’t do it.

See what’s happening here. When Jesus says love your enemies, he is not encouraging us to be passive, to give in. He shows here that love in action is something that you have applied your mind to; that you have worked out what the best course of action

would be that (1), would not undermine your own self-respect; and (2), would challenge your opponent to think and act differently.

As an “Easter” virtue, love has the perfect and unshakeable foundation: the final victory of God’s love. Love as a Christian virtue is built on God’s love revealed in Jesus. “As the Father loves me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love.” It is Saint Paul who spells this out in the most practical way when he exhorts us to strive for the highest gift of the Spirit which is love. And then the famous words:

Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s faults but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).



Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King – modern day political figures whose use of non-violent action became a way of “turning the other cheek”.



SUNDAY MASS



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

O sing a new song to the Lord, for he has worked wonders; in the sight of the nations he has shown his deliverance, alleluia.

FIRST READING: Acts 6:1-7.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 33.

RESPONSE:

May your merciful love be upon us, as we hope in you, O Lord.

1. Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just; for praise is fitting for the upright. Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp; with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs. *R*
2. For the word of the Lord is faithful, and all his works to be trusted. The Lord loves justice and right, and his merciful love fills the earth. *R*
3. Yes, the Lord’s eyes are on those who fear him, who hope in his merciful love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine. *R*

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 2:4-9.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the way, and the truth, and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father, but by me. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 14:1-12.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

I am the true vine and you are the branches, says the Lord. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, bears fruit in plenty, alleluia.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 11 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 14:5-18; Psalm 115; John 14:21-26

The past is gone, we cannot change it. The future is still to come. All we have is the present moment. It’s what we have, its where we are – now. Invite God into this space, now and at all times.

Tue 12 May (St Pancras, M)

Acts 14:19-28; Psalm 145; John 14:27-31

Acts of violence incites revenge and leads to more violence. Acts of forgiveness invites forgiveness, which dissolves revenge. This is the road to peace – through kindness and forgiveness.

Wed 13 May (Our Lady of Fatima)

Acts 15:1-6; Psalm 122; John 15:1-8

Part of us wants to believe that we can take care of everything on our own. Jesus says bluntly: “Without me you can do nothing.” But *with* Jesus there is no telling how much good we might accomplish.

Thu 14 May ST MATTHIAS, A

Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; Psalm 113; John 15:9-17

Sometimes we spend too much time dwelling on our troubled hearts. If we truly believe that Jesus is the Way, the path to explore as we search for the truth, our troubled hearts will become our trusting hearts.

Fri 15 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 15:22-31; Psalm 57; John 15:12-17

It is easy to love those who love us, but Jesus asks us also to love those who are difficult to love – our enemies, the poor, and the religious and ethnic groups we fail to appreciate or understand. Reach out to someone today.

Sat 16 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 16:1-10; Psalm 100; John 15:18-21

It takes very little to bring joy into another person’s life. When we respond to others “with gladness” instead of self-orientated gratification, we are extending the kind of spirit that today’s psalmist encourages.

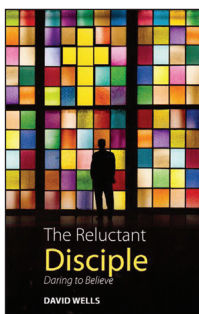
Sun 17 May 6TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66; John 14:15-21

One of the great treasures that Jesus left us was his peace. This is a deep inner peace that gives rest to our souls. Through it we have the strength and courage to face and work through our fears.

(KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial) M=Martyr; A=Apostle)

In this book of his personal reflections, David Wells helps us to see God in a range of situations that are often funny, sometimes painful, occasionally toe-curlingly embarrassing. Related with characteristically self-deprecating humour, the stories in this volume range from his moving account of visiting war graves in France to the hilarious account of his “Mr Bean in a ballet” moment in California.



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