

## Homily of Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Saul did what displeased God, and God rejected him as the king of Israel. Saul realized that God had chosen David to succeed him, he made eleven attempts, according the First Book of Samuel to kill David:

1 Sam. 18:11 - Saul attempted with a spear; 1 Sam. 18:17, 21 - Saul plotted such that his enemies, the Philistines, kill David; 1 Sam. 19:1 - Saul ordered his servants to kill David; 1 Sam. 19:10 - Saul attempted with spear; 1 Sam. 19:11 - Saul sent messengers to kill David; 1 Sam. 19:15 - Saul sent messengers to bring David back so he can kill David; 1 Sam. 19:20 - Saul sent messengers to kill David; 1 Sam. 19:21 - Saul sent messengers again, third time; 1 Sam. 19:22 - Saul went himself in an attempt; 1 Sam. 23:15 - Saul sought David in the wilderness of Ziph and Horesh; 1 Sam. 26:2 - Saul sought David again in Ziph.

The eleventh attempt is as we read in the first reading, "Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with **three thousand men** ... to search for David." We can see how desperate Saul was. The reading informs us how David had the opportunity to revenge against Saul but chose to spare Saul's life. At that time when the law was, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot," David stood out in showing mercy and forgiveness to Saul who made eleven attempts on his life. David is a perfect example of Jesus' teaching in today's Gospel: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To those who strike you on one cheek, offer the other one as well..."

This teaching of Jesus can be considered as the most radical of all his teachings. For human beings, it is normal to do good to those who are good to us, and to wish ill to those who have treated us badly, even if we are unable to retaliate against them. Many of us feel some delight when those who have treated us badly get into trouble. Many of us, actually, in one way or another, retaliate against those who offended us. David and Jesus teach us today that this must not be so.

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you" is a difficult teaching to accept especially for those who are hurting and grieving due to human beings' wickedness and inhumanity to them. We pray for their healing.

One can only but lament that the cause of suffering, poverty, violence, war, destruction of life and property, injustice, corruption, and other evils is because of the Golden Rule, "Do to others as you would have them do to you," is neglected. Rather, what happens many times is that people do to others as they would not have others do to them. Unfortunately, "might is right" and "survival of the fittest" have continued to rule our society and our world. The sad histories of domination, conquest, slavery, ethnic cleansing, holocaust, massacre, colonization, underdevelopment, apartheid, segregation, discrimination, and so on are expressions of the rejection of the golden rule. We pray that our world and each one of us may renounce selfishness and embrace and apply the golden rule in all transactions and relationships.

The readings challenge us to operate on a radically high altitude of loving and forgiving our enemies, doing good to those who hate us, blessing those who curse us, praying for those who mistreat us, and turning the other cheek to those who strike us. Then, our reward will be great. We need to pray for the grace to operate on this radical spiritual high altitude. In praying for our enemies and not planning revenge and retaliation, we hand over the situation to God who is the just judge. For the Scripture says, "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them...Do not repay anyone evil for evil... for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' Rather, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head'" (Romans 12:14-20). "Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will act" (Psalm 37:5). Whatever 'vengeance is mine,' 'I will repay,' 'you will heap burning coal upon his head,' and 'he will act' means it is for God to decide. He is the just judge.