

# FAITH @Home

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Diocese of Waterford & Lismore

*Celebrating and supporting faith, hope and love in the heart of the family!*



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Year A 7TH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME

"TO THE HEIGHTS" YOUTH EDITION ALSO AVAILABLE

## Sunday Mass Readings

### FIRST READING:

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM:

Psalm 102 (103): 1-4, 8, 10, 12-13

### SECOND READING:

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

### GOSPEL:

Matthew 5:38-48

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"



Image: www.canva.com

## Hear

Grab your Bible and look up the Gospel reading. Don't have one? No worries, you can find this week's readings online [here](#).

Check out [this video](#) on the readings for children.

## Pray

- In the Gospel today we hear a difficult message from Jesus, shocking in its day and still very challenging for us now.
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to you through this piece of Scripture? How do these words resonate with you personally?
- What is your initial response to the words, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"? Does anybody in particular come to mind? Any situation or event in your past? The Lord wants us to be free of the wounds in our hearts that can hold us back from experiencing real joy and freedom in His love. Pray for the grace to forgive and to love as Jesus does. Look at an image of the Cross to remind yourself of just how much Jesus loved those who persecuted and hated Him, and unite your struggle to His grace.

## Talk

In today's Gospel Jesus is teaching His listeners a very challenging lesson about loving our enemies.

- Can you think of any times when it's very important to be correct and exact about things (like when taking a test)? What happens if we are careless about things that are important?
- Jesus wants us to strive for perfection, to love like God loves. He gives us lots of examples of how to do this in today's Gospel: loving others, sharing... Do you think this is difficult? Is it even possible? The important thing is that we try, and we ask for God's help to do this, because we're not capable of it on our own!

## Family Challenge!

"Go the extra mile": What are you going to do for Lent this year to show Jesus that you love Him and love others? What little sacrifices can you make? Can you spend some extra time in prayer? Complain less at home? Be a friend to those who are lonely? How will you go the extra mile?

# STRIVE FOR COMPLETENESS

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 neighbor 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.

**Loyola Press Sunday Connection**

## CHECK IT OUT: BEST LENT EVER (DYNAMIC CATHOLIC)



**BEST  
LENT  
EVER**

Dynamic Catholic seeks to meet people where they are and lead them where God calls them to be. Join BEST LENT EVER, a free daily email program from Dynamic Catholic that will help you grow spiritually this Lenten season! The foundation of Best Lent Ever 2023 is Holy Moments: Every time you collaborate with God to create a Holy Moment...the real you emerges. Most people live and die without even scratching the surface of their potential. Don't let that be your story! Let Holy Moments reveal what the real you can do. Receive two inspirational videos daily and practical suggestions on how to make this your best Lent ever.

Join for free at <https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent.html>

Resource: <https://www.dynamiccatholic.com/lent/about-lent.html>



"At the end of life, we are going to be judged on the basis of our love for one another."  
St Teresa of Calcutta

## THE DIFFICULT TO LOVE

I don't know about you but this Gospel isn't the easiest one to hear, not to mind put into action. Love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile...? Is that even possible? We've all been hurt in life, felt like people have used us, walked over us, made our lives difficult (whether deliberately or not). We have to love them?

Jesus' message was as shocking and difficult 2000 years ago as it is now. Think of how the Jews viewed tax collectors and Roman soldiers - and Jesus told them to love them and pray for them? We absolutely have to have boundaries to prevent ourselves from being trodden upon. He's not asking us to be doormats. But if I'm carrying hatred or unforgiveness in my heart, if I'm wishing someone ill because of what they've done to me, then I can't call myself a follower of Christ. It's as simple as that. It's easy to love those who are lovable, that's not being virtuous; but choosing to love those who annoy us, get under our skin, who have have gossiped about us, betrayed us, or have no time for us: that's where we get to put our faith in action. It's not easy, but He never said it would be. He showed us how to do it on the Cross, and He sent His Spirit to guide us. Lean into that.

*Identify the people in your life who charge your love battery and who drain it! Choose one person. How are you currently reacting to them? What's going on in your heart when you think about them? Choose to intentionally pray for them this week, and for the grace to love them, in the way that you can.*



How to Love Someone Who is Hard to Love - Fr Mike Schmitz



Love Your Enemies - Kyle Sigmon

Check out our *To the Heights Youth Newsletter*



## Family Prayer

*Lord Jesus, teach us how to always go the extra mile in our service of You and of others.  
Amen*

## EVENTS

**Family Day at Holy Family Mission:** Sunday 26th February, 10am - 3pm. Prayer, Talk, Mass, Music, Fun and Games for all the Family! Bring a packed lunch! Booking is essential: email [info@holymission.ie](mailto:info@holymission.ie)

**Forgiven:** Young Adults aged 18-35 are invited to attend an evening of preparation for Lent. Takes place on Zoom from 7-9pm (Ireland Time) on Sunday 19th February. Come on your own or get a group together to watch! More info on [www.ascjus.org/youngadult](http://www.ascjus.org/youngadult)

### 65th Diocesan Lourdes Pilgrimage:

Under the leadership of Most Rev Bishop Cullinan. 7 - 12 June. €879 - full board. More info on [www.waterfordlismore.ie](http://www.waterfordlismore.ie) Enquiries to Joe Walsh Tours 01 2410800 / [info@joewalshstours.ie](mailto:info@joewalshstours.ie)

### Men's Prayer Group:

St Saviour's Church, Bridge Street, Waterford City. Every Wednesday evening, starts at 7pm: Exposition, Benediction, Faith Formation and Group Sharing. Led by the Servant Priests of the Home of the Mother

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- "To the Heights" Youth Newsletter ([youthministry@waterfordlismore.ie](mailto:youthministry@waterfordlismore.ie))
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