

BENEDICT XVI

ANGELUS

*St Peter's Square
Sunday, 18 February 2007*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Sunday's Gospel contains some of the most typical and forceful words of Jesus' preaching: "*Love your enemies*" (Lk 6: 27). It is taken from Luke's Gospel but is also found in Matthew's (5: 44), in the context of the programmatic discourse that opens with the famous "Beatitudes". Jesus delivered it in Galilee at the beginning of his public life: it is, as it were, a "manifesto" presented to all, in which he asks for his disciples' adherence, proposing his model of life to them in radical terms.

But what do his words mean? Why does Jesus ask us to love precisely our enemies, that is, a love which exceeds human capacities?

Actually, Christ's proposal is realistic because it takes into account that in the world there is *too much* violence, *too much* injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with *more* love, with *more* goodness. This "*more*" comes from God: it is his mercy which was made flesh in Jesus and which alone can "tip the balance" of the world from evil to good, starting with that small and decisive "world" which is the human heart.

This Gospel passage is rightly considered the *magna carta* of Christian non-violence. It does not consist in succumbing to evil, as a false interpretation of "turning the other cheek" (cf. Lk 6: 29) claims, but in responding to evil with good (cf. Rom 12: 17-21) and thereby breaking the chain of injustice.

One then understands that for Christians, non-violence is not merely tactical behaviour but a person's way of being, the attitude of one who *is so convinced of God's love and power* that he is not afraid to tackle evil with the weapons of love and truth alone.

Love of one's enemy constitutes the nucleus of the "Christian revolution", a revolution not based on strategies of economic, political or media power: the revolution of love, a love that does not rely ultimately on human resources but is a gift of God which is obtained by trusting solely and unreservedly in his merciful goodness. Here is the newness of the Gospel which silently changes the world! Here is the heroism of the "lowly" who believe in God's love and spread it, even at the cost of their lives.

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http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20070218_en.html