Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



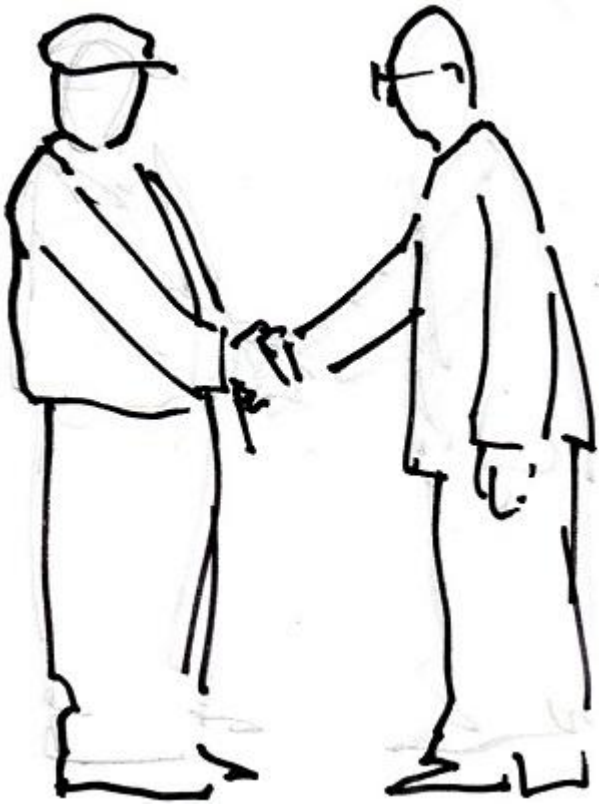
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“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:44).

2 Cor 8:1-9; Mt 5:43-48

Jesus proclaims that the standard for holiness is not just obedience to rules and rituals, but the imitation of God, whose holiness is shown by his continuous love for both the virtuous and the sinner.

This standard upends human logic and the presumption that friends deserve love and enemies deserve hate. Jesus' teaching is a revolution in how to defuse the cycles of revenge that have turned history into a bloodbath and human relationships into a game of survival.

Just the openness to pray for an enemy is the first step in breaking the spell of violence that has become the norm in human affairs. The ancient law of the talon, an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," served as a minimal attempt at proportionality, but it defined relationships as possible only by threat of retaliation.

Such a baseline notion of justice holds humanity in a state of distrust and readiness to strike back, the logic of nuclear deterrence, or MAD – mutually assured destruction. It requires national and personal defense systems that rob us of most of our creative energy and capacity for love. Jesus proposed a different world.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Here is the grace that defines those who believe what Jesus promised and demonstrated by his own commitment to live God's unconditional love.

Like everything Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, only experience will reveal its effectiveness. Early in his papacy, Pope Francis said, "The true battlefield where violence and peace meet is the human heart."

As disciples, are we willing to begin the revolution in our own hearts? If we respond to the Word and the grace that follows, we will extend the Beatitudes into every aspect of our lives. We will know the unsurpassed joy of being the children of God.