

**Thought for the week**  
**24<sup>th</sup> February 2019**  
**7th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

One has to wonder what the crowd thought when Jesus said to them, “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly. To the man who slaps you on one cheek, present the other cheek too; to the man who takes your cloak from you.....*,” and so on. Did the crowds begin to thin? Did they think this was a ridiculous and unjust teaching?

We know Jesus practiced what he preached. He did not retaliate when he was mocked and forgave those who killed them. Yet it is no easier for us as we hear those same words addressed to us as followers of Jesus. We can respond to Jesus’ commands to feed the hungry, cloth the naked etc, but it’s not quite so easy to love those who hate us. Yet, it is when we are ‘*Compassionate as our Father is compassionate*’ in hostile circumstances that mark us out as true followers of Jesus.

We must use the laws of the land to protect people, especially the most vulnerable, from physical and emotional abuse. But when we are wounded through gossip, rumours, lies and spite or our pride is hurt, how do we respond? In kind or with compassion? We are faced with two options: God’s way as shown by Jesus, leading to joy, peace and life; or the world’s way leading to misery, bitterness and death. It is not easy to follow God’s way. Yet Jesus hasn’t left us to get on with it as best we can, but offers himself to us in the Eucharist so that we might become what we receive. Let us take and receive him with grateful and penitent hearts, asking to be healed from the hurts we have received in the past so that in the future we can respond with compassion and forgiveness. The way we treat others will be the way we are treated ourselves.

*“Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate.”* (Luke 6: 36)