7th Sunday in Ordinary Time   Dr. Nancy C. Ring, PhD
Feb. 18 & 19, 2017   All Saints Parish, Syracuse, NY

When I was young, we were taught that we didn't have to like every one; we _just_ had to _love_ them! That presumed that loving a person was easier that than liking them. But that is wrong. Love is _not_ just some "feeling;" it is a commitment to work for the welfare of others.

Today, Matthew challenges us to love even our enemies. If we do this, we will be like God. God is inclusive in outpouring of divine love.

The passage presumes we have enemies. We have various types of enemies: we have personal enemies: 'enemies' may be too strong a word here, but there are certainly those people whom we dislike or whose company we tend to avoid. Do we have love's commitment to reach out to these persons? Do we work for their welfare the same as we work for the welfare of our friends?

We have ideological enemies: people whose values (or perhaps "disvalues") we see as opposite our values… or even of Christian values. Do we include these people in our love? Do we look for opportunities to do them good?

Some concrete, loving ways we can love our enemies are these: Enter into discussion with them. Don't argue and try to make our voice prevail. Try to see the world from their point-of-view. This does not mean we give up our own viewpoint, but that we widen our perspective. We allow ourselves to see more.

We remind ourselves that just as our enemies are flawed, so are we. This makes us more open to dialogue and receptive to listening to others.

To love others is to work for their well-being. Remember the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy? We teach the ignorant, those who do not know. We visit the sick. We may even seek them out. We comfort those who are physically sick, and also those who carry heavy burdens. We love those who aggravate us; we love those with whom we disagree…

It is important to remember always: that love is made concrete in action whether or not we have "_feelings_" of love.

Amen.