

4th Friday of Lent “Love without Reciprocity”
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There are times in life, and for a lot of people there might be multiple times a day, when the little acts of love we share with others isn't always appreciated but nevertheless the right thing to do. I think the people who understand this the best are parents. When a parent asks a child to brush their teeth, do their homework, or eat their vegetables they do so because they love their children...but these little acts of love aren't always appreciated by kids as we all know. When was the last time you heard a kid say, mommy, may I brush my teeth again? Or, daddy may I do more homework? Or, can I skip the ice cream and have another serving of Brussels sprouts? No one has ever heard such words come forth from a child's mouth, however when they are older they'll of course look back and appreciate how nice it is to still have teeth, to be intelligent, and to have a healthy diet.

The readings today speak to this a bit I think. The author of the Book of Wisdom is essentially pointing a finger at Israel's bad habit of killing the prophets whose words later on were really appreciated. And all the prophets usually said the same thing right? The message was usually something like “Repent you evildoers and turn back to God”. On our best days, I think we can all intellectualize that being told to repent and turn back to God can actually be very loving words to hear if it is in fact true. But when we hear those words spoken to us in the moment, it is about as annoying as being told to brush our teeth when we were kids. In our Gospel reading, Jesus reveals again that he has been sent by God for their benefit. And, the ruling class of Jesus' day were clearly offended by that. And yet, Jesus perseveres in his mission to save us from ourselves regardless of how unappreciated he was. As an aside, it feels like the Gospel is warming us up for Holy Week which kicks off a week from Saturday.

I think a reflection for today could very well be to consider all the little things we do for others out of love that aren't always immediately appreciated. It is a dangerous thing to do because sometimes this kind of exercise can tempt us to become bitter and even angry that we are not appreciated enough for what we do. But perhaps today this kind of reflection can give us an opportunity to smile a little at the lack of gratitude we might perceive at times by reflecting on how awful the world treated God when he demonstrated his love for us. God loved us and got a cross in return. And yet, Jesus was able to take the cross itself and make it the very way he would save us from ourselves. It is truly amazing when you think about it. And so, perhaps, the biggest and most profound acts of love we can share with others in life are precisely the ones that aren't appreciated right away. And so, we can ask ourselves, what are the little things that we can do today that can demonstrate our love for God and neighbor without any expectation of reciprocity?