

**Homily for February 22, 2004
7th Sunday in Ordinary Time
C Cycle**

By Father Charles Bowes

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Luke 6:27-28

When we call upon the Lord, it is even possible to love our enemies.

The Golden Rule does not require that we allow others to take advantage of us. The Gospel gives examples of this. The one who was struck on the cheek was told to rise above the attack or insult and to show who really prevailed in the situation. The one who lost the cloak was directed to act in a like manner and to relinquish even the tunic. Both individuals refused to be victims or to retaliate. By their actions, they said: I can outdo your violence toward me with my willingness to give freely much more than you sought to take from me.

Loving people who don't love us, doing good to those who hate us, may seem totally beyond our capacities – which, of course, it is. But that's part of the good news – that we have the power, when we invite the Lord to draw near, to act beyond our own capacities. And that's the key: to invite the Lord in the midst of the struggle.

With Lent beginning this week, I'm pleased that our parish can offer a way to invite the Lord to draw near...thanks to the work of Mr. Walt Hucke, who is preparing for ordination to the Diaconate. Walt will tell us of this today.

WALT:

Hi. Many of you know me, some are wondering who I am, and most are hoping I don't ask for money. I'm not!

I've been a member of OLR for about 25 years. I started as a Christmas and Easter parishioner. When I went to a Christ Renews His Parish retreat, I found a friend in Jesus. I continued to get more involved in the parish. I participated in the RCIA, became a spiritual director for several Christ Renews His Parish groups, experienced a Life in the Spirit seminar, took classes on listening skills, and went on to teach those. As my faith grew, I became a Eucharistic Minister and Lector.

When OLR began the New Life Retreats and Small Church Communities, I was asked to help with the formation and went on to give some of the talks and help the communities get started.

The reason I'm giving you my background is that I'm currently applying for acceptance into the Diaconate Program. Part of the requirement for that is

completion of the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program. For three years, I have been in training to become a better minister for our parish.

This year's Lenten Mission, "The Joy of Lent," is the fruit of that training. The concept began forming during my liturgy training class. This coincided with our parish's work with the Institute of School and Parish Development which you may remember as ISPD.

Our number-one challenge is, "How can we get parishioners of all ages involved to provide energy and long-term enthusiasm?" I wanted my project for the Lay Pastoral Ministry Program to address this need.

What I came up with, after talking to many folks, is what we are about to experience. Our Mission, "The Joy of Lent," will take place on the six Sundays of Lent from 7:00 to 8:00 pm here in the church, followed by a social gathering in the Family Room.

Dave Nissen, our Director of Religious Education and Youth Minister, will be our speaker on each of these evenings. His teachings and sharing will be followed by a response from different parish groups each week. The responses are planned and given by them. They will reflect what Dave has shared.

The groups involved are the OLR Campers, the School, the PTO, the Family Small Church Community, Octoberfest Committee, St. Vincent de Paul, Women's Breakfast, Liturgy and Worship, Fathers Ministry, and the Bereavement Team. We have over 150 people and the school working on this Mission.

I wish I could tell you some of the things they have planned for you, but that would ruin the surprise. What I can tell you is that you will laugh and cry - sometimes at the same time!

The "Joy of Lent" is in the preparing for Easter. It is a time of fasting and prayer. It can also be a time of discovering what we can do for God, others, and ourselves. It is in the doing and giving that we discover our gifts!

Our Gospel today tells us to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." I suggest that, this Lent, we do for others as we would have them do for us.

When we call upon the Lord, it is even possible to love our enemies.