

February 16, 2008
Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Matthew 5:43-48

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,

Years ago I was introduced to the concept of praying for someone who hurt me or with whom I have a difficult relationship, or even someone I do not know but do not like, trust, or respect. Quite frankly, I thought it was a silly suggestion, simply because it seemed incongruent to do it. I was young and in my youth and ignorance, I simply dismissed the idea. Over the years, I came to see this practice differently, I came to see that it was the essence of living a Christian life. But that did not make it easier to do. Recently, while having a conversation with friends about politics (I know... dangerous territory), It became apparent that any idea I offered would be dismissed as less than intelligent. I was annoyed to say the least, and , tempted to address this rather directly, But, the encouragement to pray for those with whom I disagree and have difficulty relating, came to mind. I remembered the prayer a friend offered me for just these times, "Bless him. Change me." This little prayer keeps me grounded in humility when I am tempted to wander into righteousness. I share it today with you in hopes you will use it too. Someone offered a petition the other day, praying that we would have the courage to do something decent to bring about peace in our world. This seems like a little thing, but experience has shown me what courage it takes to let go of being heard, or right, or even treated decently and pray for the one person who brings pain and hurt to our world. Every time I am faced with the opportunity to strike back or pray for this person, I remind myself of the Nike commercial—just do it.

Man must evolve for all human conflict a method, which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

~Martin Luther King, JR.

Where and with whom do I hold grudges?