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Turn the Other Cheek

By: Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio



“Love your enemies and turn the other cheek.” “Judge not, lest you be judged” (Lk 6: 27-38). It sounds admirable to some. To others, it sounds preposterous. The 19th century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche thought this sort of thinking led to a society full of weaklings. Karl Marx thought these words of Jesus helped the capitalists keep the oppressed under their thumb. Does Jesus want us to be doormats, suckers who allow ourselves to be taken advantage of by every bully, dictator and gangster that comes down the pike?

Let's look at the life of Jesus and David. David did not kill Saul, the Lord's anointed (1 Sam 26). But neither did he give himself up. He resisted the injustice of the insecure king even while he respected him and refused to give into hatred. When the citizens of Nazareth wanted to throw Jesus over the brow of the hill, he slipped through the crowds and escaped (Lk 4:29-30). His time had not yet come. When Henry VIII divorced his wife, married another, and declared himself head of the Church, his Chancellor Thomas More quietly resigned and did everything he could ethically to avoid being imprisoned and executed (see the movie *A Man for All Seasons*).

But when false testimony finally led to the conviction and death sentence for the Lord Jesus and his 16th century disciple, Thomas More, it was time to give witness to the truth with their blood. It was time to turn the other cheek.

Notice the attitude of our Lord towards his persecutors – “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do (Lk 23:34).” And Thomas More's words to the executioner, after giving him a tip: “Do not hesitate to do your duty, for you send me to God.”

Tough love sometimes demands we say tough words. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites and publicly exposed how they were fooling themselves and violating God's law (Mark 7). After the sentence was passed at his trial, Thomas More loudly proclaimed to the packed courtroom that the King had no right to proclaim himself head of the Church of England.



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But wait a minute. Isn't that judging? Didn't Jesus say not to judge or condemn?



What no human being can or should do is judge the ultimate standing of a person before God, based on the inner motivations of the heart. People can do some abominable things based on fear, hurt, or misinformation. Recall the words of Jesus: "they know not what they do." But what they do is abominable, nonetheless. God alone is competent to judge the heart. We can and must judge whether the objective behavior of a person is bad or good, right or wrong. And sometimes it is our duty to tell them that it is wrong and condemn it. Abortion is wrong. But that does not mean that this particular woman or physician is evil, separated from God, going to hell. And it does not mean that I am better and more virtuous than this particular woman or physician. Jesus said from those to whom much has been given, much will be expected. Maybe the woman and the physician coming home from the abortion clinic have done more with what they've been given than I. That's not for me to figure out. That's God's call.

My call is to love then and care enough about them to speak the truth to them, and help them get the support they need to live according to the truth.

Dr. Bernard Nathanson, notorious abortionist, and Norma McCorvey, the "Roe" of Roe vs. Wade, are prolife activists today. Why? Because they met proliferers who lived the gospel ethic, who while hating and condemning the sin, truly loved the sinner.

Love like that is supernatural. It is only possible for God and for those who let His love work through them. Will such love change everyone? The example of Judas and the Pharisees would argue not. Yet Norma McCorvey and Dr. Nathanson's example show that for those whose hearts are open, such love is irresistible.

Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio, theologian and speaker, writes from Texas. This article was originally printed in Our Sunday Visitor and is reprinted here with permission. Discover how Mary and the Rosary can change your life and lead you to the fullness of God's Love. Click here to purchase Dr. Marcellino D'Ambrosio's new two talk set "How Mary and the Rosary can Change Your Life!"

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