

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given February 21, 2011
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time - Liturgical Year A

There was a news story recently that asked, if Osama bin Laden were captured, should he be held at Guantanamo Bay or on the United States mainland? A poll was taken, and not many people liked either option. One reporter interviewed someone who suggested that the US should kill bin Laden but never report it. Christians must have participated in this poll.

In today's Gospel, we are still in the Sermon on the Mount. Two weeks ago in that same Sermon, we heard Jesus tell us that we are to be the Light of the World and the Salt of the Earth. How did this apply? How are we to do that and be those things?

Back in Jesus' time, justice was proportional. A balanced response. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". But Jesus – he advocates for no vengeance at all. No hitting back, no showing anger. In the Holy Land at that time, soldiers could conscript people to carry their equipment for one mile. Jesus says – choose to go two miles. Jesus chooses all this.

Jesus was betrayed – he forgives. Jesus was slapped across the face – he doesn't raise his hand, only asks, "Why did you hit me?" Jesus tells us to love our neighbor and, when asked "Who is my neighbor?", makes it clear that it's everyone, even our enemies. Even when he hangs on the cross, Jesus says to the thief, "Today you are with me in paradise".

We face many challenges: tension, resentment, anger, hatred. Between and among Christians. Between and among Catholics or even fellow parishioners. Between us and "the Archdiocese". It may seem like the light we are called to share is dim at best. It may feel like we are incapable of enhancing or improving a situation, like salt can enhance the taste of food.

As we gather for the Eucharist today, let's ask Christ to give us the courage and strength we need to follow his instructions, so as to make the Kingdom of God more tangible in our world.