

*"Do good to those who hate you" (Luke 6:27).*

We often hear this passage from the Gospel. But how easy is it to apply it to our lives?

I would like to illustrate this with an example of two colleagues who were talking in an office about their Managing Director.

The Managing Director was a very bad-tempered man, and many employees didn't like him.

One of the two colleagues commented that it would be a good idea if their Managing Director was posted elsewhere so that they could be free. The second replied that it would be better to pray for him to find a better job elsewhere- then he would be happier there and they would be happier here in the office.

The first colleague responded: "Me? Pray for this gentleman?... Never!!!"

Here's a second example.

One day, in a Communist country, the guards pushed a new prisoner into a cell that contained only Christians. He had been shorn of his power and looked dirty and thin. At first, nobody recognized him. But after a few minutes, someone exclaimed:

"But this is Captain X!"

He was one of the worst torturers of Christians in the country. He had arrested and beaten several of those whose cell he now shared. They surrounded him, asking how he could have brought him there. He told his story as tears rolled down his cheeks.

Two months earlier, he was sitting at his desk when he saw a twelve-year-old boy enter, holding a flower in his hand and addressing him as follows:

*"Captain, you're the one who put my father and mother in prison. Today is my mother's birthday. I always give her a flower on this day. Because of you, I no longer have a mother to celebrate, but she was a Christian and she taught me to love my enemies and to return good for evil. So I thought I'd give a flower to the mother of your children. Please give it to her, and tell her of my friendship and how much Christ loves her."*

This was too much, even for a Communist leader, himself a creature of God, *"enlightened by the true Light which enlightens every man"* (John 1:9).

He embraced the child. Now that it was impossible for him to continue torturing, he lost his position.

He now saw it as a privilege to be himself in prison among those he had imprisoned.

If a little boy could understand the words of the gospel and put them into practice, how much more should we Marshallans, who claim to be soldiers of Christ, not do the same, and even better, in the light of the words of the holy book!

The prisoners who welcomed the Captain into this cell could have given him a run for his money, as many of them ended up there because of him.

But Jesus said, *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. Wish good to those who curse you, pray for those who slander you."* (Luke 6, 27-28)

We all know this passage by heart. But whenever the need arises, we prefer to leave it aside and give a severe beating to the one who has wronged us in order to feel relieved.

This relief is only apparent, because it doesn't totally remove all desire for vengeance from our hearts.

With these words, Christ calls us to distance ourselves from our own little selves, from the emotions that break us, especially anger, pride and fear, in order to draw closer to others. To love our enemies is also to love ourselves, since it allows us to let go of the hatred in our hearts.

Dear Marshallan brothers, I would like to end by sharing this prayer with you:

*"Lord, it's easier for me to pray to you and much harder to act.*

*Remind me to ask for your help. With you, I can try to love my enemies.*

*Without you, I really don't see how I can even think about it.*

*Open me first to you and then to others. Take me out of my little inner world and open me up to real life. Thank you, Lord."*