

St. Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows
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Home Study Lesson 10

CONVERSION OF HEART

GOAL

The goal of this Edge Night is for the youth to learn about the importance of following the example of Jesus Christ in praying for our enemies and the conversion of hearts.

MAIN IDEAS

- When we are faced with war and terrorism, and even smaller scale conflicts in our schools or towns, we must remember that God is bigger than all of the bad things that are happening. He is still a good God in the midst of all the suffering.
- Jesus Christ prayed for all those who had tortured Him and crucified Him from the cross before He died, saying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). He calls us, too, to pray for our enemies.
- God asks us to have a heart like His that loves the sinner and desires the conversion of everyone, that all would turn away from their sins and back to God.

TEACHING

DO NOT FEAR

We live in a world full of conflict. For your generation, you have not known a time where there was no such thing as terrorists, terrorism, or conflicts around the globe with extremist groups. (CCC 2297, 2314) Even on a smaller scale, all of us at one

time or another have probably experienced great conflict and suffering in our own schools, with our friends, in our families, or even on social media.

So what are we to do? How are we to live in the world that seems so full of conflict?

Did you know that one of the most used phrases throughout the whole Bible is, “Do not be afraid?” When we are faced with so much suffering and sorrow, we must remember that God is bigger than all of the bad things that are happening. God has given humankind free will, that is why so many bad things happen — because people use their freedom and free will to choose to do evil or to do things that harm others. They choose to not follow the commandments of God but rather to sin against Him. (CCC 386)

But even in the midst of humankind freely choosing things that go against all that God has revealed, He is still at work bringing good out of every situation and is close to all those who are suffering.

Pause and read CCC 412

God does not want or desire for bad things to happen to us. God cares deeply for us and shows us that by sending His only Son to save us from sin and evil. He continually reveals to us His loving care.

Read any or all of the following: Isaiah 41:13, 43:1; Psalm 23:4; Philippians 4:6-7; Romans 8:15

PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

Not only does God call us to not live in fear and to remember how much He cares for us and loves us, but He also asks us to pray for our enemies.

Read Matthew 5:43-48

For those of us who have been deeply affected by a great tragedy at the hand of another person, it can seem nearly impossible to even think about praying for our enemy who has hurt us. It is right to recognize wrong actions; it is never OK to hurt another person, whether it is through gossip or on a large global scale with things such as terrorism.

We never say that sinful acts are OK. We know that God will bring about justice and those who commit these grave sins will one day have to face God for the evil that they have done. (CCC 1039)

So then why would we pray for these people who do these horrible things?

God came to save all of humanity. Jesus Christ came for the sinners and for those who were furthest from God; He died to save everyone. (Romans 5:8) Jesus Christ prayed for all those who had tortured Him and crucified Him from the cross before He died, saying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

We are called to imitate our God who loves beyond measure, even to the point of praying for those who killed Him. God asks us to have mercy on our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us, for God does not want anyone to go to hell or suffer eternal damnation — including our enemies.

CONVERSION OF HEART

As Christians, we believe that no matter the crime that has been committed, no one is outside of the mercy of God or the ability to be forgiven if they seek forgiveness from God for their sins. God asks us to have a heart like His, a heart that loves the sinner and desires the conversion of everyone, to be people that pray for those who live lives of sin that they would turn away from their sins and back to God.

God desires for all of us to have a conversion of heart, from the most hardened criminal or terrorist to the biggest bully in your school. God also desires your own conversion of heart.

When we recognize the love of God, turn away from our sins, and believe in Him, our hearts are changed. They are no longer hardened but rather filled with love and mercy and that spills over into all our actions.

We have talked about what our world would look like, how peaceful and loving it would be, if all of humanity followed the Ten Commandments and the will of God. When we pray for our enemies, we are praying for this conversion of heart.

3. Why does Jesus want us to love and pray for our enemies?

4. What will you take away from this semester to work on this year?