

*Monday, June 15, 2020*

MONDAY OF THE ELEVENTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME

MATTHEW 5:38-42

Friends, today, in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord exhorts us to nonresistance to evil. Martin Luther King Jr. was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's techniques, and Gandhi learned them, largely, from the Sermon on the Mount.

Both Gandhi and King appreciated that the text dealing with the nonresistance to evil has nothing to do with passivity in the face of injustice, but rather with a new and distinctive type of resistance.

Consider the Lord's injunction, "When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well." I realize that this sounds like mere passivity, fleeing before evil, but the truth is anything but. In Jesus' time, you would not have used your left hand for any type of social interaction, since it was considered unclean. Therefore, to strike someone on the right cheek is to strike him with the back of your hand, the way a master might treat a slave.

By turning the other cheek, one neither fights back directly nor flees, but rather stands his ground and declares, "You will not treat me that way again." It thereby effectively mirrors back to the aggressor his aggression. It is the declaration that the aggressed person refuses to cooperate with the world of the aggressor.