



# LOVE MUST ACT

*Partnerships for Sustainable Education*

*"Love Must Act as light must shine and fire must burn."  
-Fr. James Otis Sargent Huntington, OHC*

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## Love Your Enemy

Since the horror of October 7 followed by the ongoing Israeli response, I have had one biblical passage much on my mind. It is, I think, the strangest thing Jesus ever said. It does not escape my attention that Jesus lived in circumstances of brutality, oppression, and violence brought on by the Roman occupation of Israel. It would not be completely unfamiliar to Israelis and Palestinians today.

His words are from the Sermon on the Mount.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (Mt. 5:43-47)

Love your neighbors. OK, that makes sense. Love your enemies. Not so much. Not just your neighbors but also your enemies. Both. It has to be all or it is nothing.

Jesus does not deal with what is evil and what is not. He does not see some sides as good and some as bad. That's not how Jesus is thinking here. Instead, what he is saying, I think, is that both sides are, at the most basic level, the same. Just human. Partly good, partly bad.

Zach Beauchamp wrote an essay in the October 11 issue of *Vox* entitled "How to think morally about the Israel-Hamas war." He does not reference Jesus, but I think he could have.

There are good people, kind people, in both Israel and the Palestinian territories — brave souls looking to help those on the other side, amid unspeakable tragedy, and together make the land they share safe for everyone. Some of those people have already been killed by the other side; more will likely die in the coming days.

Those of us outside the region need to follow their moral example.

Only by grounding our vision in universal humanity, the idea that every life is sacred and all people deserve our respect, can we ever figure out a way to break the cycle of violence dragging Israelis and Palestinians into hell.

His conclusion is this: "I also know that justice for Israelis and Palestinians cannot be found through a mode of thinking that says only one kind of life is holy." They all are. Jesus might have expanded his own thought, "Love your enemies" because you are both the same. We are all, at the end of the day, human. Nothing more, nothing less.

Jesus knew, I think, that justice and peace flow from love and that love that is limited to *ours* as opposed to *theirs* isn't much love at all. Love for neighbors without love for enemies is, at the very most, half of love, probably less. Probably a lot less. And, as we are seeing, it isn't going to get anyone where they want to go.

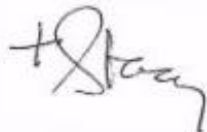
As frustratingly slow as it is, love begins person-to-person. Jesus' words about loving one's enemy are not found in the Old Testament. In this articulation, he is unique, but he may well have gotten the idea from the Law of Moses, which says, "When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back. When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free." (Ex. 23:4-5) Love starts small and works its way up. God knows, the examples of trying to start at the top are riddled with failure.

Love Must Act is committed to love that starts small and works its way up. That is why we partner with the St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital to operate an ophthalmic specialty nurse training program in Gaza. The program may help our students earn a living in the midst of oppressive poverty, and that changes a lot. It helps people with a particular need. It literally brings sight. Maybe it brings just a little bit of love.

Maybe, just maybe, it will help change things that a group of people from around the world provided training where it was needed without regard to religion, ethnicity, or ability to pay for love. Maybe, just maybe, it inspires more of the same, as the Order of St. John has been trying to do now for one thousand years. Maybe, just maybe, just as violence so often inspires only more violence, love inspires love, but more strongly.

Love your enemy, Jesus might have said, because you and your enemy are both the same.

Agape,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stacy" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bishop Stacy Sauls  
Founder and President



## **9 October 2023 To all Order of St John Establishments**

The outbreak of almost unprecedented hostilities in Gaza, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the last few days have caused great shock, sorrow, fear and pain to us all. None more so than for each and all of the St John Eye Hospital Group staff, their families, friends and the patients for whom we care and all who live and work with this violence so close-by.

The terror that must strike at the hearts of all those so close to this war-like situation is indescribable. Vivid media coverage of these evolving events brings them to life for those distant from the epicentre and causes all of us in the Order of St John to reach out with love, prayers and support for each and all people this affects.

At the time of writing, all of our people in the region are safe and well. Our hospital in Gaza has sustained some minor damage to windows from nearby explosions and access roads are blocked by building rubble. All other St John people and facilities are not directly impacted. We hope and pray that this remains the case, but it is of course a dangerous and rapidly changing situation.

Our collective pride in the Hospital and its clinics and satellites and the people who work in them is always strong and is made even stronger when we see how our team continues to care for patients, families and each other even in the toughest of times. We care for anyone who comes to us in need, regardless of race, colour, religion, creed or ability to pay. We have done that for over 140 years in Jerusalem.

The current situation and the times ahead will be very difficult and the Hospital team will derive great benefit from the extra strength and support it gains from all in the Order and our supporters.

Along with the Eye Hospital Chairman Sir Andrew Cash and the CEO Dr Ahmad Ma'ali, I have separately communicated to all the Eye Hospital staff that the Order stands with them. I have reassured them of our collective great admiration of their work in the care for others; our enormous gratitude for contribution to the community they make, their service to the Order and the strength and courage they show to us all. They all have our great admiration and respect.



I have assured the Eye Hospital team that all in the Order are ready to support as best we can and the International Office and I will remain in regular contact with the Chairman and CEO to see how we can best help. Given the communication difficulties and the load on the Hospital executive and staff, I suggest that offers of help and support from Establishments or individuals are, for the time being, best channelled through the International Office.

My message to the Hospital team concluded with: "To you all and your families: stay safe, stay strong, stay vigilant; be proud of the work you do and know that our entire Order, its members, volunteers and staff right across the world are standing with you in support."

With warmest and very best wishes and my sincere thanks for all of your support for the Order always, and at this time the prayerful and practical support for the St John Eye Hospital people and all those people suffering in the region.

Professor Mark Compton AM  
Lord Prior

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*St John is a working Order of Chivalry and a modern organisation delivering first aid, healthcare and support services around the world.*

As of October 17, 2023, the Hospital in Gaza has sustained substantial damage but is still standing. We are also happy to report no casualties of our friends and partners in Israel, Palestine, or Gaza.

We hope you might consider a gift to keep the work in Gaza and the Holy Land going. Gifts may be made [here](#) or by mail to:

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Louisville, KY 40205-3020

Thank you.

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