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The Playwright, George Bernard Shaw sent Sir Winston Churchill a caustic invitation to his Play, reading: - "Am reserving two tickets for you for my premiere. Come and bring a friend - if you have one." Churchill replied: "Impossible to be present for the first performance - Will attend second - if there is one."

In the book of Exodus the law allowed 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. But Jesus says we must love even our enemies which up to then, was unheard of. It was revolutionary then and it's revolutionary now.

Our love of others has to be from the heart and go deeper than merely avoiding confrontation. One of the fall-outs from the Northern Ireland conflict, for instance, despite the Good Friday agreement, is the building of one hundred dividing walls between its people. The problem may be contained but not truly resolved at a heart level. When Israel built those great high walls separating themselves from the Palestinians, the late Holy Father, 'saint John Paul 11', said that they should have been building bridges, not walls. Pope Francis also made reference to this. Was it Einstein who said that insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results? That certainly applies to the Middle East problem.

But then, again maybe there is a bit of latent anger in all of us which could easily be triggered when our sense of security is threatened. This is where our love is tested. But on the other side of the coin we gain no credits either if our love for others is doled out in the exact same measure in which we hope to receive it back. In other words do we only love those who love us?

Jesus says: 'If you love only those who love you, then you haven't got that much on non-believers. The badge of true Christianity is when we look beyond our clan or class - beyond those people with whom we naturally feel comfortable, beyond our comfort zones and associate with those who are not part of our inner circle. If not then our ability to love like Jesus, is somewhat compromised.

Jesus associated with different social elements of his day. The marginalised might have included – the beggars, the lepers, the Samaritans, those with tarnished reputations and people with a disability. When they engaged with Him, he enabled them to break out of the mould in which society had cast

them and realise God loves them the same as everyone else, if not more. But he also associated with the better off – people like the rich young man and Nicodemus, and even Zacchaeus whom scripture describes as a wealthy tax-collector. Apart from the rich young man who walked away, when those others engaged with Jesus it opened up new chapters in their lives and broadened their horizons.

Jesus 'broke the existing social mould' and in His efforts to be inclusive of everyone, was Himself rejected and nailed to a Cross. But in so doing, as the Scriptures tell us, "he would draw all peoples to Himself", with no one left out, except those who excluded themselves.

At Mass we come to Calvary where, as St Paul says, 'the love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit' – a love which is not restricted, but open to all - friends and enemies alike.