

Reflections

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Love One's Enemies

The Christian's law of love is universal, with no limits. We can exclude no one: neither Christians, nor pagans, nor rich people nor poor people, nor friends nor enemies, nor pleasant persons nor unpleasant persons. But we cannot give to everyone the same love. In love, an order exists.

1. We ourselves. Christ supposes this love of self when he tells us that the norm for the love of neighbor is the love for ourselves. But it must be a healthy love, balanced, mature – not an egotistical love.

2. The love for our loved ones: family, friends, persons close to us. Because “love begins at home.” And sometimes it is more difficult to love those who are near to us than those who are far away. For example, it can happen in a marriage or in a religious community: with the passing of time, one forgets the values and the virtues of the other person and almost always only pays attention to their defects. One is bothered more by the defects than being joyful for the values of the other person.

3. Those who have done something bad to us are also our neighbors: it can be about a lack of charity, for example, impoliteness, small grievances, moodiness, or there can be injustices like insults, calumnies, thefts. We call these persons our enemies.

Christ's demands in order to be his disciples. The Gospel shows us the distinguishing features of the true Christian. It presents to us the demands of the Lord for all those of us who want to be his disciples.

+ They are **very clear** demands: we have to love our enemies. We have to love without expecting payment or reward from others. We have to love them as we want them to love us.

+ They are **very concrete** demands: for example; do good to those who hate us. Pray for those who insult or offend me. Offer the other cheek to the one who strikes me. To the one who steals my cape, also give him my tunic.

Lend to others without expecting it to be returned. They are such concrete demands that no one can avoid them nor say that they do not understand them.

+ They are **very difficult** demands: it is about a very high ideal, difficult to reach. Because it is about criteria totally opposed to the criteria valid in our world today:

- Criteria of love – not of egotism or instinct.
- Criteria of generosity – not of poverty of spirit.
- Criteria of God – not criteria of man

For that reason they cause strangeness, incomprehension, mocking by others. Nevertheless, as authentic disciples of Christ, we have to aspire for them.

+ They are **very fruitful** demands: they give us an eternal reward: it is about the same acting of God who is also good with the bad: neither judge nor condemn but be understanding, forgive, give – like God does it. If we act this way, our recompense will be great:

We will be treated by God in the same way, with the same measure, as we did it. We will be embraced with generosity, mercy and paternal love by God.

Dear brothers and sisters: let us treat others with compassion, forgiveness and unselfish love. Then, God will repay us with a generous measure, full and overflowing.

Examination of conscience

1. Which persons do I consider unpleasant, overbearing, with bad intentions, enemies?
2. Who has offended me? Have they been unjust with me?
3. And what is my attitude with these persons? Do I treat them with coolness, do I try to avoid them, have I marked them forever, do I hold a grudge with them, do I want to get even with them.....? And could it not be that I am overly sensitive to their declarations, be they true or imagined?

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