

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

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To Love Your Enemy

The Jewish law only demanded to love your neighbor: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This means to love the one who is nearby, the one who lives with me, the brother, relative, friend.

On the other hand, the Jew is not obligated to love the one who is far away from him, interiorly or exteriorly. Especially, he is not to love his personal enemy, the enemy of his people (for example, hostile neighbors), God’s enemy.

Why is so much more demanded of the Christian than the Jew? Jesus spoke very clearly: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who persecute and slander you.

Love for the enemy is the sign of the true Christian, it is what should distinguish him from others. We have to imitate God the Father in that: He treats the same those who are good and those who are bad, He gives his gifts to the just and to the unjust. He does not distinguish between saints and sinners, because all are his beloved children.

It seems that Jesus only knows one law, the law of love, and that He takes from it all its consequences and even the last details. This rigor of the Lord motivates some and fills others with indignation.

And we, has Jesus motivated us or angered us with his demands? This would at least be a sign that we understood them because the worst which could happen to us would be to hear them with ears which are so distracted and so accustomed to, that they did not impress us in the least.

It is serious to listen to the Word of God and to reject it. But what to say about those who accept it, acclaim it liturgically, and are not even aware of it? For those who do not believe in Jesus, there is still one opportunity: the future continues open for them and they can convert.

But, what happens to those who imagine they believe and that, nevertheless, it does not even occur to them to think they could or should change?

To love one’s enemies when it is already so difficult to truly love those who love us!

To do good to those who hate us when it is already so difficult to put on a happy face to those who do good to us!

To pray for those who persecute and slander us, if we hardly take time to pray for our own! In regard to turning the other cheek and offering our shirt to the one who has already taken our coat, it will not be an exaggeration that no person with common sense thinks to practice.

These counsels of the Lord make an attempt against all our human reality. The law of this world continues being “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” It seems that violence can only be responded to with violence.

But the truth is that nothing is gained this way. The spiral of vengeance, of hate and violence will continue forward indefinitely. That vicious circle of acts of violence must be broken with “something new.” A different attitude than that of the adversary must be adopted.

Happy is the one who knows how to take the first step toward getting close. Because there is nothing better than suddenly, in a conflict, one forgives the other, abandons his position, and does not return the blow. There is only one way out: that one of the two has the idea of beginning to love the enemy.

What is asked of us is to do something new in our life, to be creative with love, to not let ourselves be enslaved by sin. It means to convert the enemy, the adversary, into a brother. It means to get close to him, to make him a neighbor, to love him as oneself. It means to discover in the enemy, as in each man, Jesus Christ himself.

Christianity is not an easy religion. To be an authentic Christian demands sacrifice, heroism, renouncing hate, rancor and vengeance....Therefore, let us examine ourselves:

What is our reaction to slander, offences and injustices?

Do we react with hatred, rancor, vengeance, resentments?

Or do we achieve understanding, acceptance, forgiveness and forgetting?

Let us think about it for a moment!

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