

V3_18th_after_Pentecost= The Way and Manner in Which We Should Love Our Neighbor
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This is my commandment, that you love one another.

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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls
O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+++ Jesus, Mary, Joseph +++

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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Way and Manner in Which We Should Love Our Neighbor

“And Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy be of good heart, son.” St. Matthew 9: 2.

Behold the brilliant example of the sincere love of our neighbor given us in Jesus Christ, who comforted and healed the paralytic as soon as he saw the thoughts of those who brought the poor man to him, and before they had spoken a single word to him: And consider how meekly he answers the envious Scribes and Pharisee; who were watching all his actions out of hatred, and were decrying him as a blasphemer, when he could easily have punished them! Thirdly, there was no one present who did not experience his love and beneficence: he healed the paralytic man; he filled with consolation the man’s friends who had brought him; he proved his divinity to the Scribes and Pharisees by working a miracle, and he moved all who were present to acknowledge God, to adore and praise him: See how general was the love of Jesus Christ; and from this, too, we learn how we should love our neighbor according to the express command of our Lord: “This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you” (St. John 15: 12).

- I. Christ has loved us mortals with a patient, meek love; such should be also the nature of our love for our neighbor.*
- II. Christ has loved us mortals with a beneficent love; such should be our love for our neighbor.*
- III. Christ has loved us mortals with a general love; such should be our love for our neighbor.*

I. Christ said of Himself: “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart” (St. Matthew 11: 29). It teaches us what the nature for our love for our neighbor should be; namely, that it must be a meek love, by which we bear with one another’s faults and failings, and suffer in a patient and friendly spirit what

might otherwise cause us to feel hurt and annoyed. If we had to live only with Angels, who are not subject to bad temper, to sin, nor to any other fault, then there would be no room for meek and patient love on earth, patience and meekness would be without merit, and no virtue. But as it is, we are bound to love all men, and, in the manner in which he has loved us; and at the same time we must live and deal with people who have peculiar imaginations and dispositions, and are full of rash judgments, of faults and imperfections, just as we ourselves have our faults. The one is proud, the other clownish; one is too sharp, the other too stupid and simple; one is of a passionate and hasty disposition, the other, melancholy and peevish; one is too sensitive and quarrelsome, the other, too obstinate and headstrong; every one has his faults. To try to amend them all would be vain labor: it is not in our power to make people faultless. To preserve peace and brotherly love, all we can do is to be patient and meek in bearing with our neighbor's disagreeable qualities, as St. Paul says: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6: 2). Oh, if all only had that love, what a change there would be! What a happy place the world would then become!

How is it with me in this respect? So should each one ask himself. Has my love for my neighbor hitherto been a meek, patient love? Have I learned to bear patiently and meekly the faults and failings of others? They have to bear with mine; so that it would be an injustice for me to expect them to bear a hundred faults in me, while I am unwilling to overlook the least short-coming in them. And yet, have I not often been guilty of this injustice? How often, instead of acting in a friendly manner towards my neighbor, have I not shunned and avoided him? When he came in by one door, I went out by the other, because I could not bear his manner or behavior, because he had some natural defect that seemed intolerable to me, although he was not to blame for it. How often, when I could not avoid his company, have I not given expression to my dissatisfaction by an unfriendly countenance, by sour looks, and other signs of secret contempt? I have acted towards him as Joseph's brethren did towards their innocent brother; I could not speak a friendly word to him, nor look at him in any but a hostile manner. How often have I not addressed him in a harsh, overbearing manner? How often have I not complained to others of his bad temper and natural faults, and said that it was an intolerable thing for me to have to do with such a man? If I succeeded in overcoming myself for a time for God's sake, and concealed my dislike for him so far as to meet him in a friendly manner, I still felt a secret joy when others noticed or found fault with his defects. And all this came from a want of meekness and patience in bearing with his faults.

Alas, I am thus driven to the conclusion that the love I have had for my neighbor has been altogether unlike that which Jesus Christ had for us; that the true love which he requires has as yet found no place in my heart, and that the many protestations I made to God in prayer, offering to bear with my neighbor's faults, were only empty forms without meaning. For I have not had patience or meekness enough to overlook even one of his faults, or to bear a single word of contradiction from him. Yet, even if I had not been wanting in patience and meekness, I should still have had but one quality of sincere love, which must not merely exist in the heart, but also show itself in work.

II. The same love that made Jesus Christ bear so meekly and patiently the imperfections of those with whom he had to do, and the terrible torments and insults heaped upon him by the Jews and wicked soldiers, the same love, I say, moved him to use all his divine power to do good to men: "Who went about doing good" (Acts 10: 38), as the Scripture says of him. He wandered through towns and villages, forests and deserts, seeking whom he might benefit. He drove the evil spirits from the possessed, comforted the afflicted, fed the hungry, healed the sick, cleansed lepers, raised the dead to life, sought out and converted sinners. He entered into the houses of sinners, sat down to table with them, and made no account of the wicked things that were said of him, as long as he had an opportunity of showing his generous love to man. In a word, all his thoughts, words, actions, and every step and movement he made, from the first moment of his Incarnation to his last breath on the cross, was intended for nothing else but our eternal welfare: "For us men and for our salvation." Nay, he seemed to forget himself that he might do good to others. How many miracles did he not work to help them in their necessities, and free them from their

miseries! But what did he do when he himself was in the greatest straits? When he was fasting forty days and nights in the desert, and was hungry, he could easily have turned stones into bread, or water into wine, to refresh himself. But he did not work such miracles for himself: they were for the good of others. When the wine failed at the marriage feast of Cana, he could work a miracle. "I have compassion on the multitude, for behold, they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat" (John 8: 2). And to help them, he miraculously multiplied a few loaves, so that they all had enough. The same pity induced him to change water into wine at Cana. When he was seized by the soldiers and taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemani, it would have been easy for him to tear asunder his bonds, and free himself from their hands. But no; his only care was that his disciples should be suffered to go unharmed; if you seek me, he said, here I am; drag me forth if you will; but one thing I command you, let these go in peace:

"Jesus answered I have told you that I am he; if, therefore, you seek me, let those go their way" (John 18: 8). With reason does St. Peter Chrysologus say, considering these words: "Christ is a man for himself, a God for me." That is, for the love of others he was an all-powerful God to help them in their necessities and work miracles for them; but when there was question of himself, he was, as it were, a weak man.

O Christians! Hear again those words: "This is my commandment: that you love one another;" such, too, should be the nature of your love. That is what St. John, the beloved disciple, seeks to inculcate on us in the words of his first epistle: "My dearest, if God hath so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (John 4: 11). "Be ye, therefore, followers of God," says St. Paul, "as most dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (Ephes. 5: 1,2). How can we love our neighbor as he did? Ah, methinks I hear our Lord answering: Can you not, then, do good to one another without working miracles? Have you not every day a thousand opportunities of showing kindness to one another? Are there not beggars enough crying for alms either in the public streets or at your doors? Are there not decent poor enough, who have to work hard and yet can hardly manage to support themselves and their children, who are ashamed to beg, although they are far more deserving of alms than public beggars? If you cannot multiply bread for them, you can, at least, help them now and then with your bread and money. Are there not desolate sick people in your neighborhood? If you cannot restore them to health, you can, at all events, visit them, and do what your means will allow for them. Are there not afflicted people enough who groan and sigh under the pressure of misfortune without help or consolation? If you are not able to free them from their troubles, you can, at least, frequently address a word of comfort to them, and say a word in their favor when you get the chance. Daily there are people, known and unknown, neighbors, friends, domestics, whom you can serve in different ways by acts of love and kindness. In these, then, countless similar circumstances, you can and should, according to the example I have given you, prove your beneficent love for your neighbor.

But, alas! Have I not always done quite the contrary? Instead of wishing and doing good to my neighbor, through fraternal affection, as to myself, how often have I not done him harm, and caused him sorrow and affliction? How often have I not wished evil to him, and rejoiced when he suffered misfortune or loss? How often have I not been disturbed and displeased, through envy and jealousy, at his good fortune or success? How often have I not tried through hatred to hinder those who were about to render him a service? How often have I not tried to run him down before others, by speaking evil of him? How often have I not turned away the poor from my door in a rude and harsh manner, instead of giving them alms? How often have I not added to the troubles of poor widows and orphans, instead of taking an active interest in their welfare? How often have I not been harsh and cruel to my servants, nay, even to my wife and children, to whom I owe the greatest love and kindness? Truly I have nothing of the true spirit of the love of Jesus Christ! And what judgment must I form of myself, when I consider the third quality of this love; namely, that it must be general, like the love that Jesus Christ had for us?

III. General love consists in this, that it extends itself to all men, without exception. Such was the love of Jesus Christ. He came down from heaven on earth and took human nature on himself, in order to save all men from hell, and to make them eternally happy. Therefore he gave himself to all, without exception;

Jews and heathens, great and small, rich and poor, young and old, received from him the same instruction and doctrine, the same remedies for body and soul. He was never deterred by the want and poverty of the one nor unduly influenced by the wealth and authority of the other. No one was too mean in his sight, no one too unknown or strange, nay, no sinner too wicked to be offered his favor and plentiful grace. Even to those who openly declared themselves as his sworn enemies he was willing to do good and to give grace; he invited them to come to him for that purpose, and called out to them in the most friendly terms. He sought them diligently, and often wept, bitterly, with heartfelt pity for those who, through wickedness and obstinacy, refused to receive his grace.

“This is my commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you.” If your love for your fellow-men is not great enough to impel you to love all without exception, then you have not a true Christian love, but a mere hypocritical one; for the motive that should induce you to love your neighbor is the fact that he is the image of God, your brother, your comrade, your traveling companion, your co-heir to heaven, and because Christ wishes you to love him. But this motive is not limited to a few; it holds good for all men; and, therefore, you cannot have a true love for one man without loving all. And just as it is a false repentance to say, I am sorry for having stolen, because I have offended my God thereby, but I am not sorry for having committed a sin of impurity, since the offence against God is the general motive of repentance for all sin; in the same way, it is a false love to say I love that man, because he is an image of God, my brother, my comrade, my traveling companion, my co-heir, and because Christ wishes me to love him; but I do not love that other, and cannot bear the sight of him nor wish him well. When our Lord published the law commanding us to love our enemies, just as our heavenly Father causes his sun to shine on the good and the wicked, and pours down his rain on the just and unjust, he adds: “For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?” (Matt. 5: 46, 47). If you love only certain persons to whom you are drawn by a natural inclination; if you do good, and are inclined to do good, only to those who are agreeable to you, or who are closely connected with or related to you, or from whom you expect something in return; “do not also the heathens this?” And how, then, could you be distinguished from the heathen and the Turk? Even amongst the wildest barbarians, there are friends who love each other. Therefore I say to you: “Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5: 44, 45).

How sublime and perfect is this love! But, at the same time, how rare it is in the world! Do we not now live in those unhappy days of which our Lord has prophesied, that when they come the charity of many shall grow cold? “And then shall many be scandalized, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold” (Matt. 24: 10, 12). Alas, it is already growing only too cold amongst us, so narrow are the limits in which it is circumscribed! We have certain likes and dislikes, and according to them we act towards our fellow-man. We have special friends for whom we spare neither money, nor services, nor trouble, nor labor; but for others we have nothing, know nothing, do nothing. One loves, because he is loved in return; another, because he is honored; a third, because he has received a benefit; a fourth, because he hopes for some good thing; nearly all love on account of their own advantage. But you will with difficulty find any one to love his neighbor for Christ’s sake. The rich despise and condemn the poor; although we are all made by our Creator of the same clay; although we are all made to the image of God, and are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and co-heirs to the same heaven; and therefore our love for one another should be general according to the express command of our Lord. With regard to the beneficent love of one’s enemies and of those who have injured us, we must not dare to say a word about it to most people. They would look on it as an utter impossibility, although that commandment is laid upon us by the Son of God, who does not order us to do impossible things; and that, too, under pain of eternal damnation. O charity of Jesus Christ!

Where art thou? It is only to be found in some pious souls, whose example God allows us to see for our edification, although there are few who follow it.

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