

Love one another

Today in the Gospel Jesus lifts the level of his message to an impossible height: love one another as I have loved you. God loves us with divine love, without measure; his love is infinite. He even gave his life for us. But how can we love others with his love, if we are not God? Precisely, when we love God, he lends us his love. God is love and any love is a participation of his love. We cannot love others as he does, but we can love others with his love.

To love one another is the summary of the Christian message. They used to say of the early Christians: look how much they love each other. It is a sign of our love for God. Saint Augustine says that if we do not love our neighbor that we see, how can we love God that we cannot see. All the saints show a special love for others. They are very attractive to us. We can love somebody out there, an imaginary friend, an actress that we will never see, a beautiful photoshop image, an Instagram character. But your brother, your sister, your boss, your spouse, your client, your colleague, they are the ones we need to love. And our love for God pushes us towards them, without excuses.

We normally love ourselves first, then others, normally for what they can do to us, and then we love God, just in case he exists. We need to turn things around, flip the socks inside out. This is the Christian transformation. The love of God sets our priorities right, makes the pieces of the puzzle fit together, shows the full picture. After Peter's denial, Jesus asked him: Do you love me more than these? Yes Lord. Then you can look after my sheep. Once you love me with your whole heart, then you can love others with true love.

But how can I love people I don't like? Saint Therese has a beautiful story. There was a grumpy old nun in her convent that everybody tried to avoid. She, overcoming her natural antipathy, tried her best to love her. So much so that one day this nun approached her and asked her what did she find on her: "Whenever we meet you give me such a gracious smile." Saint Therese said to herself: "What attracted me? It was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul, Jesus who makes attractive even what is most bitter." We are brothers and sisters, and love comes from the will: we can love whoever we want. At the beginning it is an attraction, we feel that we connect better with some people than others. but with time it is a choice.

Two practical things: try not to get upset and not to judge. Bring to your prayer the people or the things that make you angry. We normally don't have our priorities right, or we put other things before God. We get upset because things go wrong, people let us down. When we let Jesus be the boss, we are normally more content with the outcome. If our expectations are very high, we are ready for a crash. When we try to control everything, something always will go wrong. Try not to judge. Pope Francis says: "Before you judge look at yourself in the mirror." We don't have the task of judging; nobody has appointed us a judge of others. Who judges is the Lord who knows everything.