

Session 31: Love of God and Neighbour

HYMN: Help Us To Help Each Other,
Lord



Help us to help each other, Lord —
each other's cross to bear.
Let each his friendly aid afford
and feel his brother's care.

Up into Thee, our living Head,
let us in all things grow,
and by Thy sacrifice be led
the fruits of love to show.

Drawn by the magnet of Thy love,
let all our hearts agree,
and ever toward each other move
and ever move toward Thee.

This is the bond of perfectness:
Thy spotless charity.
O let us still, we pray, possess
the mind that was in Thee.

PRAYER:

Let us pray:
God, our Father,
look upon us with love.
You redeemed us
and made us Your children in Christ.
Give us true freedom
and bring us to the inheritance
You promised
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

— *Amen*

READING: 1 Jn 3:11, 16-18

A Reading from St. John's First
Letter

This, remember, is the message
you heard from the beginning:
we should love one another.

The way we came to understand love
was that He laid down His life
for us;

we too must lay down our lives
for our brothers.

I ask you,
how can God's love survive in a man
who has enough of this world's goods
yet closes his heart to his brother
when he sees him in need?

Little children,
let us love in deed and in truth,
and not merely talk about it.
The Word of the Lord
— *Thanks be to God*

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

The two great precepts of charity,
or love, are

"You shall love the Lord your God
with your whole heart,
and with your whole soul,
and with your whole mind,
and with your whole strength."

"You shall love your neighbour
as yourself."

We must learn to love God
above all things,
and with our whole heart.

We do this by begging Him
to teach us to love Him:
"O my God, teach me to love You."

Love for God will lead us
to reflect often on how good He is,
to speak to Him often in our hearts,
and to seek to please Him always.

We are to love other people —
everyone, without exception,
even our enemies —
by wishing them well,
praying for them,
and never allowing ourselves
any thought, word, or deed
that would injure them.

If they are our "enemies,"
we must forgive them
from our hearts.

We must also serve them
through the corporal and spiritual
"works of mercy."

The seven Corporal Works of Mercy
are to feed the hungry,
to give drink to the thirsty,
to clothe the naked,
to shelter the homeless,
to visit the sick,
to visit the imprisoned,
and to bury the dead. —

Session 31

The seven Spiritual Works of Mercy
are to convert the sinner,
to instruct the ignorant,
to counsel the doubtful,
to comfort the sorrowful,
to bear wrongs patiently,
to forgive injuries,
and to pray
for the living and the dead.

BIBLE READING

Jn 1-10

This week,
you will start reading
St. John's Gospel.

St. John may be called
the evangelist of love.

For example,
it is he who tells us
Christ's "new commandment":
"Love one another,
just as I love you."

The Word became Flesh
and dwelt among us,
St. John says:

"an only Son
coming from the Father,
filled with enduring love."

Now we share in that fullness,
he says —
"love following upon love."

Next week,
we will explore the various
"Catholic Spiritualities"
by which the saints
have demonstrated that love.

Love of God and Neighbour

Introduction

A lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, which commandment of the law is the greatest?"¹

Jesus replied, "'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments the whole law is based, and the prophets as well."²

But Jesus also said, "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as My love has been for you, so must your love be for each other."³

Four loves

In English, we say that we "love" God, our spouses, parents, friends, and children. We "love" our country, pets, jobs, homes, and cars. And we "love" certain clothes, foods, colours, painters, musicians, hobbies, *etc.*

Let us be more precise. C.S. Lewis distinguishes four kinds of love:⁴

- affection (in Greek, *storge*): the love we have for our parents, our children, familiar things like our home, or "old" things like our first car.
- friendship (in Greek, *philia*): the love we have for someone who shares an interest with us.
- sexual love (in Greek, *eros*): the love — not just the physical desire — that expresses itself in sexual union.
- charity (in Greek, *agape*; in Latin, *caritas*): love that seeks nothing for itself, but only the good of the beloved.

(We will call these last two kinds of love by their Greek names — *eros* and *agape* — because English does not have a special word for *eros*,⁵ and "charity" has come to mean merely the giving of alms.)

The first three loves are natural, part of our human life (*Bios*). By temperament, some of us are more prone to feel them than others, but none of us can produce them to order;⁶ we simply find ourselves feeling them. *Eros*, especially, "neither planned nor willed," somehow "imposes itself" upon us,⁷ almost without our consent.

Agape, on the other hand, is associated with our supernatural life (*Zoë*). It is not a feeling, but an act of the will; not something that happens to us, but something we do, intentionally, on purpose.⁸

This is the love Jesus commands us to have for both God and neighbour: *agape*.⁹

God's love: *agape*

"God is love."¹⁰ His "very Being is love," for He "is an eternal exchange of love" among three Persons.¹¹ The New Testament calls this love *agape*.¹²

Now God, "infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness," created us to make us share in His own blessed life.¹³ "At the heart of the divine

1 The Law of Moses, given in the first five books of the Bible, is said to contain 613 commandments. By Jesus' time, in attempts to cover every situation in detail, they had been amplified to many thousands. Jesus criticized this state of affairs (see Mt 15:1-20; Mk 2:23-28, 7:1-23).

2 Mt 22:35-40. Also see Mk 12:28-31; Lk 10:25-28.

3 Jn 13:34

4 See C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*.

5 Although *eros* is the source of our word "erotic."

6 See Alan Ayckbourn: *Joking Apart*, in which people try to produce friendship "to order."

7 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 3.

8 Nevertheless, it should become something we do habitually, for *agape*, or charity, is one of the three theological virtues. See the talk on "Virtue."

9 The Greek words translated into English as "love" in Mt 22:36-40, Mk 12:28-33, Lk 10:27, and Jn 13:34 are *agape* and its corresponding verb. The same is true about the many Biblical references to these laws: Mt 19:19; Jn 5:42, 14:23; Rom 8:28, 13:9, 15:30; 1 Cor 8:3, 16:24; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 5:6,14; Eph 1:15, 6:23-24; Col 1:4; 2 Tim 1:13; Phlm 1:5; Jas 2:8; 1 Jn 3:17,23, 4:7-10,16,12,19-21, 5:2-3; Jude 1:21.

10 1 Jn 4:8,16

11 See CCC 221. Also see the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

12 See Jn 3:35, 14:31, 15:9-10.

act of creation is the divine desire to make room for created persons in the communion of the uncreated Persons" of the Holy Trinity.¹⁴ There was no "necessity whatever" for creation; God simply "wanted to make His creatures share in His being, wisdom, and goodness."¹⁵

"In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. God, Who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them," even though it entails the Incarnation and the Crucifixion.¹⁶

We tend to think that God loves us because we are lovable.¹⁷ We admit we are sinners, and we know God hates sin, but we think that surely, when we are good, we have some attractiveness of our own, something in us that God finds lovable?

No. God loves us not because we are lovable, but because He is Love. His love is unconditional — He loves us even when we rebel against Him.¹⁸ "In this God proves His love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."¹⁹ God does not *find* us lovable, but *makes* us lovable.²⁰

"Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us."²¹

Accordingly, in the New Testament, God's love for us is also called *agape*.²²

God's love: *eros*

Now God, "the Inventor of all loves,"²³ "loves with the love of a Person." His love is "totally *agape*," but, at the same time, it "may certainly be called *eros*."²⁴ For example, His love, like *eros*, "is an elective love": "among all the nations He chooses Israel and loves her."²⁵

Israel, God's beloved, is repeatedly unfaithful to Him, but His "passionate love" for her is also "a forgiving love. It is so great that it turns God against Himself, His love against His justice.... So great is God's love for man that by becoming Man He follows him even into death, and so reconciles justice and love."²⁶

Accordingly, the prophets²⁷ describe God's "passion" for His people with "boldly erotic" images of "betrothal and marriage," portraying idolatry²⁸ as "adultery and prostitution."²⁹ Anything we can say about a man in love, therefore, we can say to an infinite degree about God.

- God is our *Lover*. He *loves* us. He is *on fire* with love for us.
- God *wants* us. He *desires* us. He *thirsts* for us. He "thirsts that we may thirst for Him."³⁰
- God *wants to be with us*; He made us "to be happy with Him forever."³¹
- God *searches* for us. In Christ, He not only speaks to us, but also seeks us out.³²

13 CCC 1

14 International Theological Commission: *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 65; see 68 (see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith, Appendix 2).

15 CCC 295

16 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

17 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI. The pagans thought that a good person was "dear to the gods" because he was good. Like them, we are tempted to bargain with God: "I will be good if You will do such-and-such."

18 If we go to Hell, it is because we have stopped loving God, not because He has stopped loving us.

19 Rom 5:8

20 See the talk on "Matrimony," Appendix 1.

21 1 Jn 4:10

22 See Jn 3:16, 13:1. However, *philia* "is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John's Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and His disciples" (Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 3). In His three questions to Peter — "Do you love Me?" — Jesus uses *agape* in the first two, but *philia* in the last, while Peter answers with *philia* each time (see Jn 21:15-17).

23 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

24 Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 9

25 Although "with a view to healing the whole human race" (Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 9).

26 Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 9

27 Especially Hosea and Ezekiel.

28 The worship of false gods. See the talk on "The First Three Commandments."

29 Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 9

30 CCC 2560

31 *The Penny Catechism*, 2

- God is a *Wooer*. He "allures" us to Him so that we will "respond" to Him like a bride to a bridegroom.³³
- God *does all He can* to win us for Himself,³⁴ even to giving up His own Son.³⁵ Indeed, God has done all He can possibly do, as we hear in the heartbreaking Reproaches on Good Friday.³⁶

"Could God go further in His stooping down, in His drawing near to man? In truth, it seems that He has gone as far as possible. He could not go further."³⁷

Our response

We cannot live "fully, according to truth," unless we "freely" acknowledge God's love and entrust ourselves to our Creator.³⁸ And belief in God's love "encompasses the call and the obligation to respond" to it.³⁹

However, love has to be free; by its nature, it cannot be compelled. We are not *compelled* to love God, therefore — God has given us the freedom to reject Him — but we find it natural to love Him, for only in Him can we "find the truth and happiness" we never stop searching for.⁴⁰

"God made us to know Him, love Him, and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next."⁴¹ Accordingly, He created us with the desire for Him "written" in our hearts.⁴²

Hence the first great commandment,⁴³ which, like all God's commands, is given with our good in mind. The failure to love God — by indifference, ingratitude, lukewarmness, spiritual sloth, or even hatred — is what we call sin,⁴⁴ which offends God,⁴⁵ wounds human nature, and injures human solidarity.⁴⁶

But *how* do we go about loving God? What do we *do*?

First, we get to know Him, for we cannot love someone we do not know.⁴⁷

Second, we obey Him. "He who obeys the commandments he has from Me is the man who loves Me,"⁴⁸ Jesus said. "Anyone who loves Me will be true to My word."⁴⁹ "The love of God consists in this: that we keep His commandments."⁵⁰

In other words, we are to *behave* as if we love Him.

32 Like a shepherd searching for a lost sheep (see Lk 15:1-7). The search begins "in the heart of God" (Pope John Paul II: *Tertio Millennio Adventante*, 7) and the Searcher never gives up (see Hos 11:8).

33 See Hos 2:16-17.

34 St. Augustine said, when he finally gave in to God after decades, "You called, You shouted, and You broke through my deafness. You flashed, You shone, and You dispelled my blindness. You breathed Your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for You. I have tasted You; now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for Your peace" (Augustine: *Confessions*, Book X, 27).

35 See Jn 3:16. Also see the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

36 "My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!" "I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom, but you led your Saviour to the cross..." "What more could I have done for you?... My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!" These reproofs, addressed by the crucified Saviour to His ungrateful people, form part of the liturgy on Good Friday. They are built up from passages in the Old Testament (see Mic 6:2-4), but their early history is obscure. The first three verses are found in documents of the late 9th and early 10th centuries, while the last nine are not found in their entirety before the 11th century. However, there are traces of the component parts found in the 7th century, and the use of the reproach as a homiletic device may go back to St. Cyril of Jerusalem (c 315-386). (See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "Reproaches, The.")

37 Pope John Paul II: *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, "If God Exists, Why is He Hiding?"

38 CCC 27

39 CCC 2093

40 CCC 27

41 *The Penny Catechism*, 2

42 CCC 27. "We do not learn from another to rejoice in the light or to desire life, nor has anyone taught us to love our parents or nurses." Rather, "a kind of rational force was implanted in us like a seed, which, by an inherent tendency, impels us toward love" (Basil the Great: *The Long Rules*, 2).

43 See Mt 22:35-40; Mk 12:28-31; Lk 10:25-28.

44 See CCC 2094.

45 See CCC 1850.

46 See CCC 1849.

47 "If a man loves God knowing a little about Him, he should love God more from knowing more about Him; for each new thing known about God is a new reason for loving Him" (Frank Sheed: *Theology and Sanity*, 1).

48 Jn 14:21

49 Jn 14:23

50 1 Jn 5:3

The first three commandments spell it out. 1) "You shall not have strange gods before Me." 2) "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." 3) "Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day."^{5 1}

And, in her precepts, the Church indicates the "indispensable minimum"^{5 2} for keeping the Third Commandment: 1) "You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation";^{5 3} 2) "You shall confess your sins at least once a year"; 3) "You shall humbly receive your Creator in Holy Communion at least during the Easter Season."^{5 4}

Ultimate response

Out of love, God the Father sent His Son to save us.^{5 5} Out of love, God the Father and God the Son send God the Holy Spirit to animate Christ's Mystical Body, the Church;^{5 6} to communicate Their supernatural life (*Zoë*) to us;^{5 7} and to forgive our sins.^{5 8}

They do it through the Sacraments — especially the Mass, where the Church *re-presents* Christ's saving work to us, perpetuates its memory, and applies its power to the forgiveness of our daily sins.^{5 9}

Mass, then, is God's ultimate gift to us: the most perfect sign and accomplishment of His *agape*. To ignore it, to make excuses for missing it, to protest that "we don't get anything out of it," or to turn up unprepared, like the people in Christ's parable,^{6 0} is to insult Him as deeply as we can.

In May 1994, a man named Eddie Treadway turned 100. Asked why he was on his way — as usual — to the 8:00 am Mass at St. Rose Church in Sacramento California, he said firmly, "To please God. We owe it to God."^{6 1}

Participation in the Mass is our appropriate response to God's *agape*, regardless of our feelings. "No one can always have devout feelings, and in any case, feelings are not what God principally cares about."^{6 2}

That is what Scott Hahn realized when he became a Catholic at the 1986 Easter Vigil. "I wish I could tell you about the sublimity of my feelings as I went to Mass that night," he said. "The truth is that I was so rushed, so unprepared, that I was receiving Communion almost before I knew it. But as I returned to my place, I realized that for the first time in my life, what had happened to me in church did not depend on my feelings. I had received the Body and Blood of Christ whether I felt it or not."^{6 3}

However, knowing that the Mass is God's gift to us, we should accept it with gratitude and courtesy to our Host.^{6 4} Not only should we should examine ourselves before we receive Holy Communion,^{6 5} fast from food and drink^{6 6} for one hour

51 See the talk on "The First Three Commandments."

52 CCC 2041

53 In Canada, the only holy days of obligation that may not fall on Sunday are Christmas Day and the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1).

54 See the talk on "The First Three Commandments."

55 See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

56 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

57 See the talks on "Supernatural Life," "Baptism and Confirmation," and "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

58 See the talk on "Sin and Forgiveness."

59 See CCC 1366.

60 See Mt 22:1-14; Lk 14:16-24.

61 *The BC Catholic*, July 3 1994

62 C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 9

63 I cannot find the source of this passage. It may be one of Scott and Kimberly Hahn's numerous audiotapes. That Easter, Hahn said, was one of sadness as well as joy, because he had had to ask his wife, Kimberly, to release him from his promise not to become a Catholic before 1990, and although she had agreed, she had said that she had never felt so "deeply betrayed and abandoned" in all her life. "I returned to my pew and sat down beside my grieving wife," Hahn said. "I put my arm around her, and we began to pray.... It was as if the Lord was saying, 'Scott, it isn't up to your feelings. Because of My gift to you in the Holy Eucharist, you can trust Me now more than ever. I am now abiding in you, both body and soul, in a greater way than ever before'" (Scott and Kimberly Hahn: *Rome, Sweet Home*, 6).

64 "Of courtesy, it is much less/Than courage of heart or holiness,/Yet in my walks it seems to me/That the grace of God is in courtesy" (Hillaire Belloc: *Courtesy*).

65 See 1 Cor 11:28.

beforehand, and go to Confession first if we are in mortal sin; we should also

- put Mass before work, sports, and holidays.
- dress appropriately.
- arrive early.^{6 7}
- recollect ourselves as we make the Sign of the Cross with holy water.
- greet Him by genuflecting toward the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle.
- kneel down and talk to Him rather than our neighbours.
- attend to Him, turning back to Him when we realize we have been distracted.
- stay until the end of Mass, or even after.

Especially, we should talk to Him lovingly and intimately after Communion, when we receive His Body into our own — simply breathing His name, "Jesus," or praying Psalm 63: "O God, You are my God, for You I long; for You my soul is thirsting."^{6 8}

Some people think that courtesy is hypocrisy unless it is actually felt. But *agape* is a matter not of feelings, but of will and action. When a man asked his sons to go and work in the vineyard, one said, "I am on my way, sir," but never went, while the other said, "No, I will not," but regretted it and went. It was the second, Jesus said, who actually did what his father wanted.^{6 9}

Keep in touch

Outside Mass, we should spend time with Jesus, present in the tabernacle at church, whenever we can. Of all devotions, this is "the greatest after the Sacraments, the one dearest to God, and the one most helpful to us."^{7 0}

"Jesus awaits us in this Sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet Him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offences and crimes of the world."^{7 1}

We should never forget His piteous reproach the night of His agony: "So you could not stay awake with Me for even an hour?"^{7 2}

But it does not have to be an hour. A priest used to see a man rush into church every day, run down to the tabernacle, blurt out, "Jesus, it's Jimmy," and rush out again. One day the priest was called to administer the last rites to him. As he died, the priest heard a voice whisper, "Jimmy, it's Jesus."^{7 3}

If we cannot make even a flying visit, we should at least acknowledge His presence when we pass a Catholic church by making the Sign of the Cross. And we can talk to Him anywhere, anytime: "Thank you, God"; "I'm sorry, God"; "Please, God!"; "Help, God!"; "All right, God"; "I love You, God."^{7 4}

"To pray to Christ is to love Him," said Mother Teresa of Kolkata.^{7 5} "Is it easy to love God?" an old author asks. And he answers, "It is easy, to those who do it."^{7 6}

Second great commandment

So much for "the greatest and first commandment." But "the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'"^{7 7}

The last seven commandments tell us how. 4) "Honour your father and your mother." 5) "You shall not kill." 6) "You shall not commit adultery." 7) "You shall

66 Other than water or medicine; see the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

67 "Punctuality is the courtesy of kings" (King Louis XVIII of France, 1755-1824).

68 Ps 63:2-3. "My body pines for You like a dry, weary land without water. So I gaze on You in the sanctuary, to see Your strength and Your glory."

69 See Mt 21:28-31.

70 Alphonse Liguori: *Opere Ascetiche*, Introduction, quoted in Pope John Paul II: *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 25 (see the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice," Appendix 1).

71 Pope John Paul II: *Domenicae Cena*, 3

72 Mt 26:40

73 Source unknown.

74 See the talk on "Prayer."

75 Teresa of Kolkata: *In My Own Words*

76 Quoted in C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

77 Mt 22:38. Also see Mk 12:31; Lk 10:27.

not steal." 8) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour." 9) "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife." 10) "You shall not covet your neighbour's goods."^{7 8}

Again, *agape* is the love that is commanded: we are not told to *feel* love for our neighbour, but commanded to *behave* as if we do.

A man asked Stephen Covey for advice, now that he no longer loved his wife. Covey said, "Love her."

"But the feeling just isn't there anymore."

"Then love her," Covey said.

"How do you love when you don't love?" the man asked.

"My friend, love is a verb," Covey explained. "Love — the feeling — is a fruit of love, the verb. So love her. Serve her. Sacrifice. Listen to her. Empathize. Appreciate. Affirm her."^{7 9}

In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye had not met Golde before their wedding day, but his parents had said they would learn to love each other. Now, 25 years later, he asks Golde, "Do you love me?" And she replies, "For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes, cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, milked the cow.... If that's not love, what is?"^{8 0}

She is not saying, "I've done these things because I love you." She is saying, "Doing these things *is* loving you."

"Who is my neighbour?"

Arguing about the second great commandment, a lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" In reply, Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, who, finding a Jew left half-dead by robbers, "dressed his wounds," "hoisted him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him," even paying in advance for more care and promising to pay any "further expense."^{8 1}

Jesus ended with, "Go and do the same."^{8 2} Thus He told us to love even complete strangers.^{8 3} But there are two further points.

- The man who was robbed can be said to have brought his troubles on himself, for he was "going down from Jerusalem to Jericho,"^{8 4} by a road that was known to be dangerous and the habitual haunt of brigands.^{8 5}
- The man who was robbed and the man who cared for him were naturally enemies. "Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans."^{8 6}

78 See the talk on "The Last Seven Commandments."

79 Condensed slightly from Stephen Covey: *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Part Two, Habit 1.

80 Sheldon Harnick, Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock: *Fiddler on the Roof*, Act Two, Scene One

81 See Lk 10:25-37.

82 Lk 10:37

83 "Samaritan" or "Good Samaritan" now means a helper of someone who (ordinarily) has no claim on him.

84 Lk 10:30

85 Full of narrow, rocky defiles and sudden turnings, it dropped from 700 metres above sea level to 400 metres below in about 30 kilometres. In the fifth century, St. Jerome called it "the Red, or Bloody Way." In the nineteenth century one still had to pay the local sheiks before one could travel on it safely. As late as 1930, H.V. Morton said that he was warned not to travel the road after dark because a certain Abu Jildah would hold up cars, rob travellers and tourists, and escape to the hills before the police could arrive (see William Barclay: *The Gospel of Luke*, Lk 10:25-37).

86 Jn 4:9. When the Jews wanted to insult Jesus, they called Him a Samaritan, and, in the next breath, claimed that He was possessed by a devil (see Jn 8:48).

The Samaritans were descended from the ten northern tribes of Israel, who had intermarried with pagans after their conquest by Assyria in 622 BC. They had developed their own form of Judaism and had their own temple. The Book of Ezra recounts that, when the Jews began to return from the Babylonian Exile in 538 BC, they rejected the Samaritans' help in rebuilding their temple and the Samaritans proceeded to sabotage the project (see Ezr 4). In 128 BC, the Jews destroyed the Samaritan temple at Mt. Gerizim (see Josephus: *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13:9). In 6-9 AD, the Samaritans defiled the temple in Jerusalem by strewing bones in the temple precincts during Passover (see Josephus: *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:29-30).

By Jesus' time, Jews and Samaritans hated and despised each other bitterly. Jews cursed Samaritans in their synagogues and would not accept them as witnesses in Jewish courts. They considered them religiously unclean, partly because of their intermarriage with pagans, but even more as followers of what they called a satanic heresy. Jews would not accept Samaritans even as converts and they believed that they were excluded from Heaven. Because the Samaritans were hostile, and also because Jews believed that they could be contaminated by passing through Samaritan territory, Jews who were travelling between

Jesus's parable, therefore, implies that our neighbours include complete strangers, people who can be said to have brought their troubles on themselves,⁸⁷ and even bitter enemies⁸⁸ — in fact, every human being in the world.

Our own neighbours include

- drunks, drug addicts, AIDS patients, and beggars outside Holy Rosary Cathedral.
- those whose sins⁸⁹ are public and frightful: fraudulent politicians, pedophiles, abortionists, Hitler, or Stalin.
- those who have injured us personally: the friend who betrayed us; the co-worker who did us out of a job; or the spouse who committed adultery, abandoned us, or abused our children.

Forgiveness is an essential part of this love.⁹⁰ Indeed, if we see and love Christ in everyone,⁹¹ we have no enemies, said Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo SDB of East Timor.⁹² Lewis says that he once asked a clergyman who had seen Hitler — "and had, by all human standards, good cause to hate him" — what Hitler looked like. The clergyman replied, "Like all men; that is, like Christ."⁹³

"Whoever the poorest of the poor are, they are Christ for us," said Mother Teresa — "Christ under the disguise of human suffering."⁹⁴ Jesus said that as often as we do a kindness to "one of My least brothers," we do it to Him.⁹⁵

If we love our neighbours — all of them — like this, with *agape*, we keep the last seven commandments as a matter of course. "*Agape* never wrongs the neighbour; hence *agape* is the fulfilment of the law."⁹⁶

* * * * *

A new commandment

By His parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus made it clear that the second great commandment includes everyone. By His "new commandment," given the night before He died, He made it even more demanding: "Such as My love has been for you, so must your love be for each other."⁹⁷

What was He referring to?

He had just finished washing their feet. "If I washed your feet — I Who am Teacher and Lord — then you must wash each other's feet," He said. "What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so you must do."⁹⁸

Judea, in the south of Palestine, and Galilee, in the north, would avoid Samaria and travel through Transjordan instead, on the other side of the Jordan River. (See *Bible History Online*.)

87 "I'm one of the undeserving poor, that's what I am... But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow's that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don't need less than a deserving man; I need more. I don't eat less hearty than he does, and I drink — oh, a lot more" (Alan J. Lerner and Frederick Loewe: *My Fair Lady*, Act One, Scene 5).

88 See Mt 5:44.

89 Objectively speaking.

90 See the talk on "Sin and Forgiveness."

91 See Acts 9:4-5.

92 Bishop Belo, co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, spoke during an interview published in an Italian magazine early in 1996. He was referring to the treatment of the East Timorese by the Indonesians a few years before, which included the killing of 200 marchers at a funeral procession in Dili and the beating up of hundreds of Catholic protesters. "I speak of pardon," he said, "but frequently people respond: 'Pardon whom? The one who killed my father, my mother, my brothers? Reconcile with whom, our enemies?'"

When two Molotov cocktails were thrown through the windows of Immaculate Heart of Mary Croatian Catholic Church in Vancouver March 15 1992 and shots from a 9-mm gun broke several windows, pastor Fr. Jerko Caleta OFM refused to speculate on the motive for the attack or to link it to the conflict then raging in the Balkans. "I said it must be somebody who is sick in mind and heart, someone who needs healing by God, who needs to make his or her confession to God," he told *The BC Catholic*.

See Immaculée Ilibagiza: *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust*, in which Immaculée forgives the man who tortured and killed her brother. Also, see the talk on "Sin and Forgiveness."

93 C.S. Lewis: *Prayer: Letter to Malcolm*, XIV. Sr. Josephine Carney SSA, sister of Archbishop James Carney of Vancouver, said she once watched a tramp come into church, sit down behind a man with a small child, and start smiling at the child. The father turned, smiled, passed the child over the seat, and went on praying. "It was lovely of you to trust a stranger with your child like that!" Sister Josephine said afterward, and the man replied, "But, Sister, didn't you see who that man was? It was Jesus!"

94 Teresa of Kolkata: *In My Own Words*

95 See Mt 25:34-40.

96 Rom 13:10

97 Jn 13:34. Once more, *agape* is the word used.

98 Jn 13:14-15

Moreover, He had just fed them His Body and Blood, thus taking on the sins of the world⁹⁹ and assuming "willingly"¹⁰⁰ the agony of separation from His Father.¹⁰¹

Finally, He was preparing to sacrifice Himself for us on the cross the next day, and "there is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."¹⁰²

We must love our neighbours, therefore, much more than we love ourselves: we must love them as Christ loves us.

For love of God

By His "new commandment,"¹⁰³ Christ does not tell us to *feel* love for our neighbours, but to *behave* toward them as He did. However, we must do it *for the love of God*. *Agape*, or charity, is the name of "the theological virtue"¹⁰⁴ by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves *for the love of God*.¹⁰⁵

Should we not love people *for their own sake*? Is it not fraudulent to say that we love them when we look at them and see Christ?

No. When we love people for their own sake, we love them with one of the natural loves. Now the natural loves are good, and we should usually encourage them,¹⁰⁶ for, although they themselves are not *agape*, they make it easier for us to practise *agape*.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, our natural loves — especially the *eros* of young lovers — can show us what habitual *agape* is like. It is as if Christ says to us through *eros*, "Just like this — with this generosity — not counting the cost — you are to love Me and the least of My brethren."¹⁰⁸

But none of the natural loves goes far enough; we do not extend them to strangers, let alone enemies. *Agape* — loving our neighbour as Christ loves us — encompasses more people and lasts longer than any natural love.

But is it really *love*? Does it have the *warmth* of love?

Yes. If you think of love as simply a feeling, then love of others for the love of God sounds cold. However, paradoxically, as soon as we *behave* as if we love our neighbour, we start to feel love toward him.¹⁰⁹

A worldly man *feels* loving toward a few people because he loves them with one of the natural loves. A Christian, trying to *behave* lovingly toward everyone, finds himself loving them naturally more and more, and loving naturally more and more people, including people he could never have imagined himself loving naturally.¹¹⁰

Nobody thinks that Mother Teresa's love for the poor was cold; yet she said, "All we do — our prayer, our work, our suffering — is for Jesus. Our work has no other reason or motivation.... I serve Jesus twenty-four hours a day.... This is a point many people do not understand."¹¹¹

99 "For our sakes God made Him Who did not know sin to be sin" (2 Cor 5:21)

100 See Eucharistic Prayer 2.

101 See Mt 27:46; 15:34.

102 Jn 15:13

103 Jn 13:34

104 See the talk on "Virtue."

105 CCC 1822. See the talk on "Virtue."

106 Just as it is often our duty to encourage our natural liking for exercise or wholesome food.

107 See C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 9. Lewis says "usually" and not "always" because it is possible for our natural love for one person to make us uncharitable, or unfair, to someone else, or even to the same person. For example, a doting mother who indulges her affection may spoil her child.

108 See C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, V.

109 Or at least to dislike him less (see C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 9). For example, I recalled my dislike of Elvis Presley every time I passed the picture of him that used to be painted on the side of a house in Coquitlam. But once I started using that picture as a reminder to pray for his soul, I found that my dislike ceased, or at least lessened. "This same spiritual law works terribly in the opposite direction. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. The Germans, perhaps, at first ill-treated the Jews because they hated them: afterwards they hated them much more because they had ill-treated them. The more cruel you are, the more you will hate; and the more you hate, the more cruel you will become" (C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 9).

110 See C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 9.

111 Teresa of Kolkata: *My Life For the Poor*, 2. The following (a slight variation on *The Paradoxical Commandments* written by Kent M. Keith in 1968 as part of a booklet for student leaders) is said to be

Once, before Mother Teresa sent a young woman to visit the Home for the Dying in Kolkata,¹¹² she reminded her of the care with which the priest had touched the Body of Christ at Mass, and said, "Make sure you do the same when you go to the Home, for Jesus is there in His distressing disguise."

When the girl returned, "with a beautiful smile on her face," she said, "They brought in a man from the street covered with maggots. And for three hours I touched the Body of Christ."¹¹³

No natural love could ever be that warm.

When we love God, we look at others not with our own eyes and feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus. His friends are our friends.¹¹⁴ We know that He loves them, and that is enough for us.

Accepting *agape*

God does not give us directly everything we need for developing our *Bios*. We need others. And it is the same with our *Zoë*.¹¹⁵

"I distribute the virtues quite diversely," God told St. Catherine of Siena; "I do not give all of them to each person, but some to one, some to others.... I shall give principally [*agape*] to one; justice to another; humility to this one, a living faith to that one.... And so I have given many gifts and graces, both spiritual and temporal, with such diversity that I have not given everything to one single person, so that you may be constrained to practice [*agape*] toward one another.... I have willed that one should need another and that all should be My ministers in distributing the graces and gifts they have received from Me."¹¹⁶

In particular, we all need our neighbours' *agape*. This is not the sort of love we want. We want to be loved naturally — with affection, friendship, or *eros* — "for our cleverness, beauty, generosity, fairness, usefulness. The first hint that anyone is offering us the highest love of all" — *agape* — "is a terrible shock."¹¹⁷

But there is something in each of us that cannot be loved naturally. We cannot blame others for not loving it naturally — we might as well expect them to like the taste of rotten bread. Only with supernatural love can they love what is not naturally lovable.

All who have good parents, wives, husbands, or children may be sure that they are sometimes¹¹⁸ receiving *agape*: that is, being loved not because they are naturally lovable, but because "Love Himself is in those who love them."¹¹⁹

"Why should anyone love you?" God asks. "I am the only One Who makes much of nothing; human love has to be deserved. You do not know how unworthy you are of *any* love at all. Whom will you find to love you, undeserving as you are, except Me, only Me?"¹²⁰

written on the wall of Mother Teresa's home for children in Kolkata: "People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway. If you are honest and sincere, people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway. What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today will often be forgotten. Do good anyway. Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway."

112 According to the rules of her order, the Missionaries of Charity, the girls visit the Home for the Dying the day after they join.

113 Teresa of Kolkata: *My Life For the Poor*, 2

114 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 18.

115 See CCC 1936.

116 CCC 1937

117 "This is so well recognized that spiteful people will pretend to be loving us with charity [*agape*] precisely because they know that it will wound us. To say to one who expects a renewal of affection, friendship, or *eros*, 'I forgive you as a Christian' is merely a way of continuing the quarrel." Those who say it are of course lying, but they say it because they know that if they were telling the truth, it would be hurtful (see C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI).

118 Or "at all times in respect of some one particular trait or habit" (C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI).

119 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

120 See Francis Thompson: *The Hound of Heaven*. The actual words of the poem are as follows: "Wherefore should any set thee love apart, seeing none but I makes much of naught, and human love needs human

Putting God first

Jesus warned that "if anyone comes to Me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be My follower."¹²¹ He did not mean that His followers must abandon their families; He meant that we must have a conscious *readiness* to give up our natural loves when they conflict with love of God.¹²²

Now the only way of *knowing* that we are really ready to do something is actually to do it.¹²³ Accordingly, God asks some of us to renounce a natural love for His sake.

For example, in 1982, He asked Father John Kilty to leave Holy Trinity Parish, which he had founded in 1948 and where he had been pastor ever since. He asked Abraham to leave his own people¹²⁴ and later to kill his only son Isaac — to the point of raising the knife to strike.¹²⁵ He has asked innumerable martyrs to renounce their natural love of life.¹²⁶ He asks a man to renounce *eros* for a woman who is already married.¹²⁷

But even when He does not ask us to *kill* our natural loves, He asks us to let Him *transform* them into supernatural love.

Transforming natural love

As we have seen,¹²⁸ we cannot enter Heaven except as members of Christ's Mystical Body. If we let Christ be formed in us,¹²⁹ we can enter Heaven *in Him*.

Similarly, our natural loves cannot enter Heaven unless they are transformed into supernatural love. As God became Man by taking our nature up into His,¹³⁰ so He takes our natural loves up into *agape* — makes them the "tuned and obedient instruments of Love Himself."¹³¹

In Heaven, we will love those we loved on earth insofar as we have let God transform our natural love for them into supernatural love.¹³² Without this transformation, a natural love would be meaningless in Heaven. Meeting in Heaven someone you had loved only naturally on earth would be like meeting, as an adult, someone who had been your friend in elementary school because you both liked

meriting.... Alack, thou knowest not how little worthy of any love thou art! Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee, save Me, save only Me?"

121 Lk 14:26

122 "Sins are committed when, out of an immoderate liking for things — since they are the least goods — we desert the best and highest goods" (Augustine: *Confessions*, Book II, 5).

123 As Samuel Johnson said, "We can hardly be sure of the state of our own minds, but as it stands attested by some external action; we are seldom sure that we sincerely meant what we [in fact] omitted to do" (Samuel Johnson: *Letter to Hester Thrale*, July 20 1775, quoted in Alec Guinness: *Commonplace Book*). Guinness also quotes English writer and critic Edward Garnett, who said, "How can I know what I think until I hear what I say?" and his wife, English translator Constance Garnett, who said, "How can I tell what I feel until I see what I do?"

124 See Gn 12:1-9.

125 See Gn 22:1-14.

126 "Love for life did not deter them from death" (Rv 12:11). See the talk on "Bearing Witness: Living as a Catholic."

127 He asked the von Trapp family (whose story is significantly different from that told in *The Sound of Music*) to give up all their possessions. Before Hitler invaded Austria in 1938, he forbade all tourist traffic into the country, causing serious financial hardship in Austria. Baron Georg von Trapp took his money out of English banks to bolster the small family bank of a friend, but the bank failed and the von Trapps lost all their money. Maria von Trapp was so delighted that she hugged her husband until he could hardly breathe. "You act as if you had made a million dollars!" he said, and she replied, "Oh, much more! I have just found out that we were not really rich; we just happened to have a lot of money. That's why we can never be poor. I am so happy to know that we don't belong to those for whom it is so hard to enter the Kingdom of God" (Maria Augusta von Trapp: *The Story of the Trapp Family Singers*, 10).

128 See the talk on "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ."

129 See Gal 4:19.

130 God became Man "not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by assumption of the Manhood into God" (Athanasian Creed).

131 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

132 We must not make reunion with our loved ones the goal of our Christian life (see C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI). "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart has no rest till it comes to Thee" (Augustine: *Confessions*, Book I, 1).

hopscotch.¹³³

Just as, in becoming members of Christ's Body, we do not lose our identities, but become fully and uniquely human;¹³⁴ so, as our natural loves are transformed into *agape*, they do not lose their nature; rather their nature is perfected.¹³⁵

In fact, Lewis demonstrates that the natural loves cannot maintain themselves even in this world.¹³⁶ Something else, which he first calls "decency and common sense," then "goodness," and finally *agape*, must "come to the help of the mere feeling if the feeling is to be kept sweet."¹³⁷

"Deny yourself"¹³⁸

We have to let God transform our natural loves. But *how*?

We are commanded to love our neighbours *as ourselves*.¹³⁹ That means overcoming the unjustified selfward bias that we inherit as part of our fallen nature. This bias, called *selfishness* or *egotism*, accounts for the daily friction and frustration that arise in *all* our natural loves.

Egotism says that all this friction is someone else's fault — my husband's laziness, or my wife's urge to control, or my children's disobedience. But friction results from the rubbing together of *two* surfaces. We will feel it most severely where we ourselves protrude; the faults we hate most in others are probably our own.¹⁴⁰

In everyone, *including us*, there is something that needs forbearance, tolerance, forgiveness, *agape*.¹⁴¹ The obvious necessity of practising these virtues ourselves, and accepting them from others, forces us to try to let God turn our natural loves into *agape*.¹⁴² Thus "these frets and rubs are beneficial."¹⁴³ Where there is much friction, the necessity of rising above our natural love is obvious; without much friction, we may not realize that we have any rising to do.¹⁴⁴

133 See C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI.

134 See the talk on "The Communion Among the Saints in the Body of Christ."

135 "Grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it" (Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, Part 1, Question 1, Article 8). For example, it is not mere *eros*, but *eros* perfected by *agape*, that Shakespeare describes in Sonnet 116: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove. Oh no, it is an ever fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken;... Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks within his bending sickle's compass come; love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom." He is not making the indefensible statement that *eros* does not change; he is stating the truism that *agape* does not change. That is why he finishes with, "If this be error, and upon me prov'd, I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

The first two lines of this sonnet — "Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments" — are often misunderstood. They mean that true love — *agape* — never ceases, no matter what "impediment" to natural love arises.

136 Lewis recounts how a critic reviewed a poem by William Morris entitled *Love is Enough* in just two words: "It isn't" (see C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI).

137 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI. Without *agape*, "*eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 7).

138 See Mt 16:24.

139 We are commanded to love our neighbours, not to be unselfish. "If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, 'unselfishness.' But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old, he would have replied, 'love.' You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative idea of unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness were the important point. I do not think that this is the Christian virtue of love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial [see Mt. 19:28-29; Mk 10:29-30], but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ," and if we do, we are promised a hundred times as much in this world and, in the world to come, eternal life (see C.S. Lewis: *The Weight of Glory*).

140 That is why a real estate agent I knew used to answer the question "What are the neighbours like here?" with the question "What are they like where you live now?"

141 See C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI. That is why we must be always ready to forgive and apologize. However, even here, "we can take a wrong turn." Some Christians "are always unnecessarily asking, or insufferably offering, forgiveness. Who would not rather live with those ordinary people who get over their tantrums (and ours) unemphatically, letting a meal, a night's sleep, or a joke mend all?" (C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI).

142 See C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI.

143 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI

144 C.S. Lewis: *The Four Loves*, VI. "In this way also it may be harder for the rich to enter the Kingdom" (see Mk 10:25).

In the first stages of *eros*, especially, lovers find it impossible to imagine, let alone believe, that friction will ever arise. And when — not *if*, but *when* — it does, they think they should start again at the bottom of the ladder, "in love" with someone else. Instead, they should recognize it as an invitation — perhaps even a challenge — to take the next step upward on the ladder from *eros* to *agape*.¹⁴⁵

Sheldon and "Davy" Vanauken succeeded, perhaps as far as is humanly possible, in preserving their *eros* — their "inloveness" — in its pristine state. But Davy died young.¹⁴⁶ Afterward, Lewis wrote to Vanauken that "one way or another, the thing had to die. Perpetual springtime is not allowed.... You have been treated with a severe mercy."¹⁴⁷

Eros has to grow into *agape* or it will not even remain sweet *eros* here on earth, let alone enter Heaven. Analogously, eggs have to grow into birds or they will not even remain fresh eggs, let alone learn to fly. "It may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird, but it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg. We are like eggs at present. And we cannot go on indefinitely being an ordinary, decent egg. We must be hatched or go bad."¹⁴⁸

Let's get practical

Agape means *willing good to our neighbours*¹⁴⁹ and treating them accordingly.

a) Give alms

Nowadays we give to the poor mainly through Church or state organizations. How much should we give?

"The only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. If our charities do not pinch or hamper us, they are too small." And in giving to relatives, friends, neighbours, employees, or fellow-Christians, much more is demanded, even if it means crippling or endangering our own financial position.¹⁵⁰

b) Give with love

In giving alms, do it with supernatural love — *agape*.¹⁵¹ "If I give everything I have to feed the poor,... but have not *agape*, I gain nothing," St. Paul says.¹⁵²

For example, ask a beggar his name; use it in saying good-bye and God bless.

c) See the best in others

As far as possible, interpret others' words and actions favourably¹⁵³ — not just giving them "the benefit of the doubt," but consciously imagining scenarios that put them in the best light.¹⁵⁴

145 It was *agape* that they promised in their wedding vows, not *eros*.

146 See the talk on "Matrimony."

147 Sheldon Vanauken: *A Severe Mercy*, IX

148 C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book IV, 8

149 See St. Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*, Part I-II, Question 26, Article 4.

150 See C.S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, Book III, 3. For most of us, he notes, the temptation against charity comes from our fear of insecurity. However, it can also come from our pride, which can make us spend more than we ought on showy forms of charity like tipping or hospitality and less than we ought on people who really need help.

151 "Love — *caritas* [*agape*] — will always prove necessary, even in the most just society," for there will always be suffering and loneliness. In fact, a state which tried to provide everything "would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person — every person — needs: namely, loving personal concern" (see Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 28).

In an example of generosity without loving personal concern, a very rich man realizes that he has often "felt sorry" for his cousin, but that his pity has been "mixed with contempt" and that he has given his cousin money because he has "never liked him." And his "easy, unthinking generosity" has spoiled his cousin (see Georgette Heyer: *The Nonesuch*, Ten).

152 1 Cor 13:3. "*Agape* is patient; *agape* is kind. *Agape* is not jealous; it does not put on airs; it is not snobbish. *Agape* is never rude; it is not self-seeking; it is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over injuries. *Agape* does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to *agape*'s forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure. *Agape* never fails" (1 Cor 13:1-8).

153 See CCC 2478.

154 For example, instead of scornfully dismissing a man's attempt to look 30 years younger than he was, I imagined that he was doing it to please his wife. Instead of wondering whether a man entertaining a young boy in an expensive restaurant was trying to make it up to the boy for the loss of his mother, probably through divorce, I tried to imagine that he was a Big Brother.

(In this context, realize that it may be hard to read the facial expressions or the body-language of people of other races.¹⁵⁵)

d) Trust people

When we are asked for help, there is usually a story, and sometimes it seems to be a lie. However, it is better to be taken in than not to give.

When we treat people better than they deserve, we exert a certain pressure on them to rise to our opinion of them.¹⁵⁶

e) "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"¹⁵⁷

- Listen to others instead of planning a reply.
- Delay judgement; first, observe.¹⁵⁸
- Stay detached from expectations in human relationships; respect others' liberty.¹⁵⁹
- Try to see things from others' points of view.¹⁶⁰
- Realize that between the stimulus and our response, there is freedom to choose; e.g., when someone annoys us, we can choose whether to be annoyed or not.¹⁶¹

155 On a Washington State Ferry, at the bottom of the sign asking people to report anything that roused their suspicion, I saw a note reminding readers that "race, skin colour, ethnic background" and "religious belief" do not, *per se*, make people suspect. I myself had always thought the Dutch impolite. But then I learned that American businessmen seem impolite to the Japanese when, making an offer, they look them in the face instead of giving them time to display the face they want to be seen. As a result, I began to substitute "direct" and "straightforward" for "impolite."

156 See Jerome K. Jerome: *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*; and Giovanni Guareschi: *The Excommunicated Madonna*.

Don Camillo, the parish priest of a small village in the Po Valley in Italy, hired a young man to paint "The Madonna of the River." The painter found a model and eventually finished the painting.

But when Don Camillo saw the picture, he shouted, "Celestina! The daughter of the tavern-keeper at La Rocca!" And he stormed out of the church.

The young man followed him in great distress.

"I put everything I had into bringing out the spiritual qualities of that face," he said.

"How can you spiritualize the face of such a wanton creature?" Don Camillo stormed. "Why, when she opens her mouth, teamsters blush at the words that come out of it! No one can wish a face like that upon the Madonna. The only possible title for it is 'The Excommunicated Madonna!'"

Finally, however, he agreed to take another look. He stared at the painting, scowling. The expression of the Madonna of the River was calm and serene and her eyes were pure and clear.

A few days later, he showed the painting to a few of his most trusted parishioners, begging them not to say a word about it, with the result that the story spread like wildfire. That evening, when he was closing up the church, he saw the malicious face of Celestina in person.

"What do you want?" he asked gruffly.

"I want to see the painting!" Celestina shouted. "And I want to be present when you take my face out of it!"

Don Camillo looked at her ugly expression. "It isn't your face," he said. "Come and see for yourself." The two of them gazed up at the picture. Then Don Camillo looked at Celestina. Her face relaxed, while her eyes lost their malice and became gentler and more serene. The vulgarity disappeared, and gradually she seemed to take on the expression of the painting.

Then she said in a low voice: "How beautiful!"

Finally she turned to Don Camillo.

"Please don't destroy it!" she begged. "Or at least, not too soon." And to his surprise she knelt down in front of the Madonna and made the sign of the cross.

A few days later she returned and spoke to the artist.

"You're a real artist!" she sighed. "That Madonna is a beauty. It would be a shame to take her away."

"I quite agree. I put my heart and soul into her, but people say an excommunicated Madonna won't do."

"I'm not excommunicated any longer," said Celestina with a smile. "I fixed that up this morning."

157 See Lk 6:31.

158 A sign in the Museum of Glass in Tacoma Washington says: "I like it. I don't like it. Are there other ways to think about works of art before this rush to judgement? Try description, the basis of appreciating all art. In describing an object, we pause to take a careful look. We notice details that we didn't see at first. We make note of colours, textures, shapes, and the interrelationship of parts. The more we see, the more we are likely to decipher the meaning of the piece and the intention of the maker. The more we see, the more likely we are to understand why we like or do not like an object or change our opinion." And human beings are God's supreme works of art.

159 "Power — when it seeks to dominate other wills and minds (except by the assent of their reason) — is evil" (Humphrey Carpenter: *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*, 181).

160 For example, I turn on the wipers as soon as it starts to rain, while Father Vince does not turn them on until it is really raining. For a long time, each of us used to annoy the other by turning on, or not turning on, the wipers. Then, one day, Father Vince took his glasses off — and immediately he saw what I see. Talk about a different point of view!

161 "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way" (Viktor Frankl: *Man's Search for Meaning*, Part I). Frank spent three years in four Nazi concentration camps.

- Practice "senseless acts of kindness and random acts of charity."¹⁶²
- Consciously practice courtesy:
 - Use people's names, even if it means asking for them more than once.
 - Say "please" and "thank you."
 - Smile.¹⁶³
 - Compliment people.
 - Pass on others' compliments.
 - Be punctual.
 - Leave early for appointments, to avoid having to drive as if our business is more important than that of anyone else on the road.
 - Avoid making dogmatic statements without certainty — and then be ready to give the authority; otherwise say, "It seems to me that..."

Conclusion

"God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God in Him,"¹⁶⁴ St. John says. (Of all the evangelists, he mentions *agape* most often.¹⁶⁵) "If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is brought to perfection in us."¹⁶⁶ "Let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God and has knowledge of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love."¹⁶⁷

The word in each case is *agape*. "If you see charity" (*caritas, agape*), "you see the Trinity,"¹⁶⁸ St. Augustine said.

At first, we have to be *commanded* to love God for His own sake and our neighbours for His sake. However, in "the love-story between God and man," our "communion of will" develops into a communion of thought and feeling, "and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide." God's will ceases to be "alien," imposed on me by the commandments; it becomes "my own will."¹⁶⁹

Bishop Thomas Flynn of Lancaster England¹⁷⁰ once saw Father¹⁷¹ Ronald Knox¹⁷² absorbed in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. It made such an impression on him that years later, when he was preaching that love of God is an act of the will, he added, but "don't tell me that this is *all* the love of God means. I have *seen* people in love with God."¹⁷³

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162 Like paying the parking bill for the car behind or letting someone into a lineup.

163 Victor Borge said that "a smile is the shortest distance between two people."

164 1 Jn 4:16

165 John mentions *agape* 66 times (in his Gospel and his first letter); Matthew, 10; Mark, 5; and Luke, 12.

166 1 Jn 4:12

167 1 Jn 4:7-8

168 Augustine: *De Trinitate*, VIII, 8, 12. See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 19.

169 See Pope Benedict XVI: *Deus Caritas Est*, 17.

170 January 6 1880 - November 3 1961; Bishop of Lancaster 1939-1961.

171 Later Monsignor.

172 February 17 1888 - August 24 1957. The son of an Anglican Bishop of Manchester, he became a Catholic in 1917 and was ordained a priest in 1919.

173 See Evelyn Waugh: *Ronald Knox*, Book III, One.