

HOW TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER

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Lessons: Matthew 25:31-40, Divine Love 13:2

We have seen that the Lord wishes everybody to love Him—not only the angels of heaven, but also people on earth, and even little children—and that He gives to each one certain Commandments that he may keep, in order that he may show his love for the Lord. We have also seen that the Lord does not command people to do more than they are able. And for this reason He asks great and noble things of angels, lesser things of people on this earth, and of little children very simple things that are within their strength and their ability to understand. It is by doing these little things that children learn to love the Lord, and when they love Him He can slowly make them wiser, and stronger, so that after a while they will be able to do greater things.

Thus we learn to love the Lord by keeping His commandments, and by keeping them in the way, which He intended for us, whether we are little children, grown men and women or angels of heaven.

When the Lord was on earth He especially taught His disciples to love one another. “This is My Commandment”, He said, “that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:12-13).

This is the secret of really serving the Lord. We cannot serve Him directly. We cannot see Him in this world; we can only think of Him, and picture Him in our minds. And as we think of Him, who created the whole world, who rules over all men, and to whom belongs all things both in heaven and on earth, we see that there is nothing we can do for Him. What can we give Him that He does not already have? We have nothing except what He gives us. All that we have is already His. To give Him this, as we would give a gift to one of our friends, is nothing. It is nothing, first, because it already belongs to Him. And it is nothing, in the second place, because, compared with all the many, many things He has, it is so small—so little, that it could not possibly make any difference to Him. So we cannot serve the Lord directly. But still He has made it possible for us to serve Him by helping one another.

To help others is to perform a use. And the whole world is made up of uses. Everyone who is born into the world is able to perform some use to others. That use the Lord uses to help both us and others to come at last into heaven. And this really helps Him, because He loves this more than anything else. The Lord

does not want anything for Himself. The one thing He wants is that people may become happy and live happily in heaven forever. So when we do something to help others become happy—when we give them things they need, and perform some service for them that will give them joy and pleasure, then the Lord Himself is delighted, and it is as if we had done something for Him. You know that when you love a person very much you feel happy when that person also feels happy. If he receives something that he has long wished to have, you rejoice with him. And this is the truest happiness, because it is like the Lord's own happiness, which He feels when people are made truly happy.

And so the Lord has created the world in such a way that we can all help one another. Every person is dependent upon many other people for the things he needs. If you want a house, you cannot build it yourself. You must employ those who know how to build houses to do it for you. If you need clothes, you must buy them from those who have spent time and labor in making them. You cannot raise for yourself all the food you need to eat, but others do it for you, and you obtain it from them. And so it is with all things. Other people are doing things for us all the time, things that we need, things without which we would suffer want, hunger, cold, pain and distress. All these things that they do for us are what are called uses, and because others do these uses for us, we should love them. Our love for them should be like the Lord's love. We should love them because they help to make others happy. We should not think only of what they do for us, but rather of what they do for many other people also. And because of this, their work, we should be thankful to them and should try to do something ourselves to help them, and to make them happy.

This is especially true of adults. All people have their work, their use, whereby they serve others. And each one of you, when you grow up will also have a use, whereby you will serve others. And in doing this use, the Lord will give to you some of His own happiness—the happiness that comes from seeing others benefited. But there are also uses, which you perform now, as little children. Think of all the things that your parents do for you every day, to provide the things that are necessary to make you happy. Both your father and your mother work very hard, just to give you the things you need. Your teachers also work and study to give you the instruction you receive in school. For these and many other blessings you should be thankful to them, and you should try to serve them.

How can you do this? There are little ways in which you can serve them. You can do little things to help them, from time to time. But you are still so small that you cannot do very much. But there is one way above all others by which you can really serve them, and in doing so learn to love them, even as the Lord loves you. That is by learning the things they would have you learn. These things are what will make it possible for you to do some great use for others when you grow up. They will prepare you to do some still greater use in the other world, when you have been called by the Lord to heaven. Unless you

learn many things, you cannot perform a use. Nobody can do anything without first learning how. And the more you can learn the greater the use you can perform. But to learn many things takes time. And the time that the Lord has provided for this is while you are growing up from little children to become men and women. This is the reason why at this time you go to school. This is the use, this is the work that the Lord gives you now; so that in doing it you may learn to love one another as He loves you.

There is nothing that makes your parents or your teachers gladder than to see you do well the lessons that are given you. They are glad because they see that then you will be able, when you grow up, to be of great service to your country, or great service to the Church, of great service to the Lord, by helping others. And if you do this work well now because you look forward to the day when you can become strong enough and wise enough to perform a use like other people, then will your progress give you happiness also. It will teach you how to love others, and in so doing will teach you how to love the Lord.

If you have the ambition to do a great work in the world, not for the sake of yourselves, but for the sake of others, then will you eager to learn; you will study carefully and well. You will not try to get out of your lessons. You wilt not be satisfied until you have done them honestly. And this spirit of hard, honest work, established now, while you are children, will make you fit to do a great work later on. And in this lies the greatest happiness anyone can know. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

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"Loving the neighbor means doing uses to the Church, the state (or one's country), society, and the fellow-citizen, because these are the neighbor in the broad and in the limited sense; neither can these be loved otherwise than by the uses that belong to each one's office (or occupation) A priest loves the Church, the state, society, the citizen, and thus the neighbor, if he teaches and leads his hearers from zeal for their salvation. Rulers and officers love the Church, the state, society, the citizen, and thus the neighbor, if they discharge their respective functions from zeal for the common good; judges, if from zeal for justice; traders, if from zeal for integrity, workmen, if from rectitude, servants, if from faithfulness; and so forth. When with all these there is faithfulness, rectitude, uprightness, justice, and zeal, there is love of use from the Lord; and from Him they have love to the neighbor in the broad and in the limited sense; for who that in heart is faithful, honest, upright, and just, does not love the Church, the state, and his fellow-citizen?"

"From what has now been said it is plain that loving the Lord is performing uses with regard to their source, and loving the neighbor is performing uses with regard to their object, and that the immediate end is the neighbor, use,

and the Lord; and that love thus returns to Him from whom it is. For every love as source through love for its object returns to love as source, which return constitutes its reciprocal. And love continually goes forth and returns through deeds, which are uses, since to love is to do. For love, unless it becomes deed, ceases to be love, since deed is the effect of love's end, and is that in which it exists" (*Divine Love* 13:2)

"Within the affection of truth of those who are in this affection there is the affection of good, but so obscurely that they do not perceive, thus do not know, what the affection of good is, and what genuine charity is. They do suppose that they know, but it is from truth, thus from scientifics, and not from good itself. Nevertheless they do the goods of charity, not in order to merit anything thereby, but from obedience; and this in so far as they apprehend that it is the truth. For they suffer themselves to be led by the Lord out of their obscurity of good by means of the truth which appears to them to be truth. For example: being ignorant what the neighbor is, they do good to everyone whom they suppose to be the neighbor; especially to the poor, because these call themselves poor on account of being destitute of worldly wealth; to orphans and widows, because they are so termed; to strangers, because they are such, and so on with all the rest; and this they do so long as they are ignorant what is signified by the poor, by orphans, widows, strangers, and others. Nevertheless seeing that in their affection of apparent truth there lies in obscurity the affection of good, by which the Lord leads them to such action, they are at the same time in good as to their interiors, and in this good the angels are present with them, and are delighted there with their appearances of truth by which such persons are affected. But they who are in the good of charity, and from this in the affection of truth, do all things with discrimination, for they are in light; since the light of truth is from no other source than good, because the Lord flows in by means of good. These persons do not do good to the poor, to orphans, to widows, and to strangers, for the mere reason that they are so termed; for they know that those who are good, whether poor or rich, are neighbors more than all others; and therefore in so far as these persons do good to the good, they do it to others through them. They also know how to make distinctions among goods, and so among good men. They call the general good itself their neighbor in a greater degree, for in this there is regarded the good of still greater numbers." (*Arcana Coelestia* 2425)