

# LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

## 1. The command

“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” (Lk 10:26-27);

“Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow man you have carried out your obligations. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments”. (Rom 13: 8,10); “So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and remember that your brother has something against you leave your offering there before the altar go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.” (Mt 5:23-24); “The nearer we draw to God in our love for him, the more we are united together by the love for our neighbour; and the greater our union with our neighbour, the greater is our union with God” (Dorotheus of Gaza)

## 2. The nature of the love

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.” (Jn 15:9); “I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.” (Jn 13:34-35); “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.....This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:9,12); God: you cannot love me as I loved you. I have loved you without reservation, but you love because I have first loved you. However, when you love your neighbour, then you are loving as I have loved you, and I accept that as you are loving me as I have loved you. (Catherine of Siena); "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of Your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust... You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Matt 5:43-48

## 3. Love personally

It is not love in the abstract that counts. Men have loved brotherhood, the workers, the poor – but they have not loved “personally”. It is the hardest thing in the world to love...It is never the brothers next to us, but the brothers in the abstract that are easy to love. (Dorothy Day); “God loves each of us as if there were only one of us” (Augustine)

## 4. Practical care

The good Samaritan “Go and do the same yourself (Lk:10;17); “If a man was rich enough in this world’s goods saw that one of his brothers was in need, but closed his heart to him, how could the love of God be living in him?” (1 John 3:17); “When someone steals another's clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not? The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor.” (Basil); What does love look like? it has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy, it has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like. (Augustine)

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## 5. Christian discipleship is oriented to others

“There must be no competition among you no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first, but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus. His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself... “(Phil 2:3-6); “Nobody should be looking for his own advantage, but everybody for the other person’s.”(1 Cor 10:24); For the love of Christ urges us on. (2 Cor 5:14) (not drawn but driven); “I have nobody like him (Timothy) here, as wholeheartedly concerned for your welfare: all the rest seem more interested in themselves than in Jesus Christ. (Phil 2:3-5,21).

## 6. Meeting Jesus in your neighbour

“The sacrament of neighbour” (Congar); “as often as you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me”. (Mt 25: 40); Sacrament of the present moment. Sacrament of the present moment

## 7. Service Love is service

“Love God, serve God; everything is in that.” (Clare); “the proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist” (Gregory the Great); “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45); “For who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves: The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as the one who serves.” (Luke 22:27); “If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.” (John 13:2-15); “Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all.” (Mk 10:44); “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mk 9:35); “The greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves.” (Luke 22:26); “Each of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others.” (1 Peter 4:10)

## 8. Necessary Virtues: Humility / Patience

“The mountain lords it over the molehill, but both are dwarfed by the stars” (Oriental saying); “A soul enkindled with love is a gentle, meek, humble and patient soul” (John of the Cross)

## 9. Judging others

‘Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, “Let me take the speck out of your eye”, while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour’s eye.” (Mt 7:1-5); “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; grant pardon and you will be pardoned.” (Lk 6:36); “There will be judgement without mercy

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for those who not been merciful themselves; but the merciful need have no fear of judgement.” (James 2:13); Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy Mt 5:7

## 10. Speech and Neighbour

“Wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish can all be tamed by man, and often are; but nobody can tame the tongue – it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse men who are made in God’s image”. (James 3:7-9); “Brood of Vipers, how can your speech be good when you are evil? For a man’s words flow out of what fills his heart. A good man draws good things from his store of goodness; a bad man draws had things from his store of badness. So I tell you this, that for every unfounded word men utter they will answer on Judgement day, since it is by your words you will be acquitted and by your words condemned” (Mt 12:34); “If anyone does not offend in word he is a perfect man.” (James 3:2); Be sure then you are never spiteful, or deceitful, or hypocritical, or envious and critical of each other” (1 Pet 2:1); “Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” (Eph 4:29-32)

## 11. Put people before things

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will be your heart be also” (Matthew 6: 19-21) Hence, we call this nakedness a night for the soul. For we are not discussing the mere lack of things; this lack will not divest the soul, if it craves for all these objects. We are dealing with the denudation of the soul's appetites and gratifications; this is what leaves it free and empty of all things, even though it possesses them. Since the things of the world cannot enter the soul, they are not in themselves an encumbrance or harm to it; rather, it is the will and appetite dwelling within it that causes the damage. (John of the Cross)

**12. Sharing faith** Your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God (Lk 9:60); The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today (Francis); “We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become. If we love things, we become a thing. If we love nothing, we become nothing. Imitation is not a literal mimicking of Christ, but rather it means becoming the image of the beloved, an image disclosed through transformation. This means we are to become vessels of God’s compassionate love for others.” (Clare of Assisi); “The habit of performing some conspicuously virtuous action through seeing it performed by another is one which very easily takes root.” (Teresa of Avila); “Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society” (Francis); “Love one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that compelled by such an example, the sister may also grow in the love of God and charity for one another.”(Clare)