

“And Who Is My Neighbor?”

If one — anyone — is of the mind to seek perfection, which is a requirement, love of neighbor must occupy the central place in his life — **ALONGSIDE** — the love of God. There seem to be very few of us, however, who really understand the importance of love of our neighbor. It appears that love (not “luv”) of neighbor has escaped the awareness of many, even while we insist we love our neighbor as required by the precept of Charity. We say that we wish no man any harm, and this seems to ease our scruples. However, upon careful examination it becomes clear that we have only an occasional love for our neighbor. Selfrighteousness interrupts Charity when friction, or disagreement or jealousy or doubt or misunderstanding or idle gossip come to the surface. Then, without trial and without warning, the poor neighbor is cast out into the exterior darkness! God’s intention is that we make love of neighbor a *full-time occupation*. Disagreement must never tarnish Charity. “Father, forgive them!”

There is only Charity, and one supernatural love, and it is love of neighbor as well as love of God. Hence to aim at perfecting our love of God without meaning to devote ourselves *at the same time* to the love of our neighbor is the most elementary spiritual nonsense. Some of God’s children are excluded from the love we are commanded to give them. The reason we give for such exclusion is that such and such a person (or group) for such and such a reason is in the wrong, does wrong things, does not think as we think, and is therefore evil — sometimes we say he is essentially evil.(??) Such people, we reason, should not be allowed to “mix” with good people — God’s chosen people — who do all things right. We work to do all things “right” therefore we must be “God’s chosen people”. Please recall the selfrighteous pharisee who went to the temple to pray. He could not “mix” with the poor publican — who remained at the rear of the temple. Call to mind also what the pharisees said when Mary Magdalene touched the Master’s feet: “If only He knew who that is that touches Him!”

We must never be guilty of judgement. No man has the God given right, duty or privilege to judge ANYONE, and to place any man in the place of the condemned. The prerogative to judge belongs to God and to God alone! God made all men, and God loves all men. Christ died for all men — not just a select few. We, too, must love all men without exception, for God makes no exception. Besides, as we give the precept of Charity a more thorough look, let us not forget to contemplate the answer given to the question: “And who is my neighbor?”