

One Body Initiative: Week 5- Out of Love of Neighbor

March 12, 2021

Scripture:

[Matthew 25:31-46](#)

[Matthew 5: 43b-45, 48](#)

Commentary:

3. The man who is wise, therefore, will see his life as more like a reservoir than a canal. The canal simultaneously pours out what it receives; the reservoir retains the water till it is filled, then discharges the overflow without loss to itself. He knows that a curse is on the man who allows his own property to degenerate. And if you think my opinion worthless, then listen to one who is wiser than I: "The fool," said Solomon, "comes out with all his feelings at once, but the wise man subdues and restrains them." Today there are many in the Church who act like canals, the reservoirs are far too rare. So urgent is the charity of those through whom the streams of heavenly doctrine flow to us, that they want to pour it forth before they have been filled; they are more ready to speak than to listen, impatient to teach what they have not grasped, and full of presumption to govern others while they know not how to govern themselves.

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4. But you, my brother, your salvation is not yet assured; your charity as yet is either nonexistent or so meager and reed-like that it bends with every breeze, puts its trust in every spirit, and is carried along by every wind of doctrine; or it is so great that you transcend the limits of the commandment by loving your neighbor more than yourself, or yet again so unsound that, contrary to the commandment, it bows to flattery, flinches under fear, is upset by sadness, shriveled by avarice, entangled by ambition, disquieted by suspicions, tormented by insults, exhausted by anxieties, puffed up by honors, consumed by envy. If you discover this chaos in your own interior, what madness drives you to insinuate yourself into other people's business? But listen to what a prudent and vigilant charity advises: "This does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves: it is a question of balancing." "Do not be over-virtuous." It is enough that you love your neighbor as yourself; this is the balancing to which the Apostle refers. David says: "My soul will feast most richly, on my lips a song of joy and, in my mouth, praise." To preclude a mere empty yawning, he wishes that infusion should precede the effusion, an infusion to the fullest capacity that gushes out. In this he shows prudence, his relieving of others does not embarrass himself; and he has a right intention, since he imitates him of whose fullness we have all received. You too must learn to

await this fullness before pouring out your gifts, do not try to be more generous than God. The reservoir resembles the fountain that runs to form a stream or spreads to form a pool only when its own waters are brimming over. The reservoir is not ashamed to be no more lavish than the spring that fills it. And so, he who is the primal Fountain of life, full in himself and filled with himself, gushed forth and danced into the secret places of the heavens about him, to fill them all with his favors. And having endowed these remotest heights and recesses, he burst upon our earth, saving men and beasts through his munificence, multiplying his mercies everywhere. When he had first filled up the secret places, his teeming mercies billowed over; they poured upon the earth and drenched it, to multiply its riches. You must imitate this process. First be filled, and then control the outpouring. The charity that is benign and prudent does not flow outwards until it abounds within.

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A total love is the law in all its fullness, it can effectively fill the heart's capacity. Finally God himself is love, and nothing created can satisfy the man who is made to the image of God, except the God who is love, who alone is above all created natures. The man who has not yet attained to this love is promoted to office at the gravest risk to himself, no matter how distinguished he be with other virtues. Even if he knows everything, if he gives all his goods to the poor and lets his body be taken for burning, without charity he is worthless. See how precious the graces that must first be infused, so that when we venture to pour them out we may dispense them from a spirit that is filled rather than impoverished. We need first of all compunction of heart, then fervor of spirit; thirdly, the labor of penance; fourthly, works of charity; fifthly, zeal for prayer; sixthly, leisure for contemplation; seventhly, love in all its fullness. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, accomplished by the process called infusion; and, in so far as it has taken place those services called effusion can be truly and hence safely performed to the praise and glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the same Holy Spirit lives and reigns, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

-Bernard of Clairvaux, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* "SERMON 18 THE TWO OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Reflection Questions:

- What are some ways that you have experienced the love of God through your relationships with other people?
- Is your relationship with God, experienced in prayer, something that overflows into your relationships around you?
- What does it mean to be "generous as God is generous" in your life as a student at UP?
- Jesus describes generosity with examples: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, housing the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick

and imprisoned. In your own life, what are ways that you can be generous with those around you?

- What are some other examples from Jesus' life or His teachings that can help us to better love our enemies?
- Think about some of your closest relationships. How can you use the generosity and love you experience in that relationship as a model for generosity to those you disagree with or don't particularly like?

Materials for Further Consideration:

Scripture Verses:

[Luke 10: 25-37](#)

[Galatians 5: 13-15](#)

[1 Corinthians 12: 1-31](#)

Other Resources:

[“Why Community is Important During a Pandemic”](#) – article from Grotto Network

[“Christians Can't Just Love Their Neighbor”](#)- article from Word on Fire blog

[“Compassion and Kinship”](#) – video from Fr Greg Boyle, SJ

[“A God Passionately Interested in Human Beings”](#)- article from Church Life Journal

“But the final word is love. At times it has been, in the words of Father Zossima, a harsh and dreadful thing, and our very faith in love has been tried through fire.

We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone any more. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.

We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community.

It all happened while we sat there talking, and it is still going on.”

— Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist*