

Sr. Margaret Dorgan's Weekly

"This reflection appeared first in *The Church World*, the diocesan weekly of Maine. More of these meditations will be offered on a regular basis. "

[<<Previous Meditations](#)

© copyright 2005 by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

LOVING ONE ANOTHER

To unlock the secret of how we should deal with one another, St. Therese of Lisieux reflects on the new commandment of Jesus: "that as I have loved You, you also love one another" (Jn 15:12). She asks the question: "How did Jesus love His disciples and why did He love them?" These are questions you and I ask ourselves in pondering human relationships. The How and the Why. How do we love? Why do we love? Therese answers in sober, matter-of-fact language, "It was not their natural qualities that could have attracted Him...they were poor ignorant fisherman filled with earthly thoughts. Still, Jesus called them His friends, His brothers. He desires to see them reign with Him in the kingdom of His Father" (*Story of a Soul* p. 220).

Like Therese, we look at those we deal with and faith tells us they are chosen, as we are, to reign with Christ. What then are the practical implications for us? This is the counsel Therese offers: "I understand now that charity consists in bearing with the faults of others, in not being surprised at their weakness, in being edified by the smallest acts of virtue we see them practice. I understood above all that charity must not remain hidden in the bottom of the heart.... Charity must enlighten and rejoice not only those who are dearest to us, but all..." (ibid). We are not selective; we try to affirm everyone we have contact with in a way that truly appreciates the worth of that person. This can be a demanding task when others do not treat us well.

Therese continues, "It is no longer a question of loving one's neighbor as oneself but of loving as Jesus has loved....Lord, I know You don't command the impossible....Never would I be able to love my Sisters as You love them, unless You, O my Jesus, loved them in me. It is because You wanted to give me this grace that You made Your new commandment....When I am charitable, it is Jesus Who is acting in me" (ibid, p. 220,21).

Therese tells us that through grace Jesus becomes with us the agent of what we do. The surest sign of His saving action in us is love for our brothers and sisters who share our mortality. We who are invited to the company of the saints in glory, experience human fellowship in a world marked by Christ's redeeming grace. But here the wonder is hidden--sometimes so thoroughly that we taste a purifying bitterness in relationships. Often grace urges us to pray for compassion as we turn to our Savior, asking Him to arouse some feeling of benevolence within us because we seem so unable to deal with a particular situation.

My long-ago novice mistress, Mother Aloysius of Concord Carmel advised, "If we are watchful over our thoughts in relation to charity, our words will more easily take on a kindly tone. When our work brings us in contact with others, let us always show them the spirit of humility, respect and deference that charity calls for, whether the persons we work with are older or younger, or in a higher or lower position than we are" (*Fragrance from Alabaster* , p. 19).

Outside the sphere of work, our interactions with people demand the same willingness to adjust to who they are. Especially in our intercourse with family members, we are summoned to a higher exercise of love which can at times be arduous and even frustrating. Marriage introduces new people into a widening circle, an addition to celebrate but one that may also require forbearance.

We grow older and where it once seemed easy to get along together, sometimes a change occurs. Jesus throughout this process tells us to love one another. We need His help and it is always available. We turn to Him, the Incarnate Word, when we are tempted to lash out with bitter phrases. "Bow humbly under God's mighty hand, so that in due time God may lift you high" (1 Pt 5:6).

We bring to mind the realization that we and those we relate to are called to holiness. We are traveling along sacred paths that God allows to interconnect. "That they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10) is Christ's promise of fulfillment. The "more abundantly" gives us even here below a sip of wine from the eternal banquet where a place is reserved for us and for those dear to us. Drinking this sip of the wine of heaven doesn't take us away from what is transpiring in the here and now. We see each happening and those who are involved in it as part of a design made in heaven and made for heaven. The cross-stitch in that design is based on **"Love one another as I have loved you."**

Sister Margaret Dorgan, DCM