

September 10, 2023



Photo by Sr. Karin Nürnberg, CSJ, from the Abbey St. Hildegard in Eibingen, Germany

GOD OF INFINITE LOVE

By Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Today's Second Reading and Gospel

Brothers and sisters: Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

ROMANS 13:8-10

Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever

you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

MATTHEW 18:15-20

Reflection

The readings for today can be difficult to read and reflect upon because the message can be one that seems to call us into confrontation. Not many of us move toward confrontation; it seems easier to avoid a situation and move on. Stepping back and listening to the deeper messages in these readings, what emerges is quite clear – we are to love one another. While these words are simple and clear, putting them into practice takes a lifetime of perseverance, prayer, commitment, and grace.

These readings call us to directly speak with our brothers and sisters when disagreements occur; reframing this edict helps to make this "doable." Sometimes a gentle challenge can be the most loving response to our loved ones and acquaintances. If we are to love one another, we do so during the mundane, joyful, and difficult situations that inevitably happen in life. To ignore or avoid situations between us is often not the most loving thing to do. If we care for and love one another, then tending to the health of our relationships means getting into the messiness of our humanness!

In my congregation, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, our early documents speak about "loving the dear neighbor without distinction." These words flow from the commandment in today's second reading to "love one another," as well as in the Gospel, to "love your neighbor as yourself." If we are honest with ourselves, this is no easy task. It requires of us the commitment to work through our fears, prejudices, and resistances to those who live, think, pray, and worship differently than ourselves.



Pyrenees
Photo by Sr. Jayne Helmlinger, CSJ

Living Love Poem

Love, O love beyond measure. Press on; don't turn away from difficulties, move toward troublesome encounters with a heart open and curious to learn and love.

Tread lightly, as we walk this Earth. Each step we take, each encounter we have, can add to another's happiness or squash their spirit and hope in an instant.

Love, O love, the dear neighbor without distinction. Love, O love the dear neighbor as yourself. Open wide, O heart created for love, for this is what our faith asks of us.

For Pondering

- What arises within you when you take in the words "love your neighbor as yourself"?
- What act of loving kindness might you offer to your "neighbor" today?

For Prayer

*O God of infinite love,
we pray for the grace to love freely and generously.
We ask for Your grace to guide and form us
into the loving persons You've created us to be.
May we embody love in our thoughts, words and actions
as this day unfolds.
Amen.*

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Center for Spiritual Development | 434 A South Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868 714-744-3175

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