

Love your
neighbor as
yourself

-Jesus



I want to
accustom
all the
inhabitants
...to look on me
as their brother

-Br. Charles de
Foucauld

August, 2005

To my brothers and sisters in Christ,

Once again, summer has decided to stop and oppress the poor people of Mississippi. Everything seems be burdened by the heat, and even the sea birds try to stay out of the noonday sun. Visitors, though, seem intent on visiting the beach regardless of the weather.

I ask your prayers for the repose of the soul of Charles Strickland, a friend of mine who recently died of cancer. I met him through a local priest, Father Greg, who knew that we both shared an interest in sailing. I only knew Charlie for two months, but the depth of his faith was beautiful. He spent the last month of his life at a local hospice, and was peaceful to the end. I hope to continue to work with hospice patients here, as it is a reminder of the brevity of our lives.

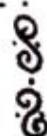
In other news, I have bought a small home in Biloxi, about a mile north of the beach. It has a large backyard, two bedrooms, and was something that I could afford. I have transformed one of the bedrooms into what is, for lack of a better word, an oratory. Since the Blessed Sacrament is not present, it is not truly a chapel, but it is a room set aside for prayer.

Other than that, life continues as usual down here. The recent storms were quite something to behold, and they are a great reminder of God's omnipresence and power. I am especially fascinated by the resilience of the local sea life, especially the sea birds. They ride out the storms, and are back to their normal routines in no time. They remind me of the people of this area—it is incredible to see how fast everything is cleaned up after a storm.

Please continue to keep me in your prayers, and always remember to thank God for your life and the many graces that he gives us.

In peace and love,
Matthew

Please send all
correspondence to: Matthew Manint
325 Hiller Dr.
Biloxi, MS 39531



Prayers are needed and appreciated!
(no postal fee required)



meditation

august 2005

As we proceed from meditating on detachment, we see that all detachment prepares us for one thing—true love. Love is a word that has been much abused in western culture. Too often, we see love as a feeling that must be absolutely pure, free from all uncertainty or negative feelings. Yet, when we see the fruit of our concept of love (a 50%+ divorce rate, rampant premarital sex, and a billion broken hearts), are we not forced to admit we may have the wrong idea? This meditation will focus on love as an act of the will, and the next meditation will lead us into the love of God.

We must start with the truth that love involves the will more than it involves feelings. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the will is the faculty of choice. It is the act of selecting an object or action, using feelings to assist in the choice, but not being dependent on them. Our feelings, having been marred by original sin, are not infallible guides. Jesus himself indirectly confirmed this when he said, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15,13). Yet, is there a single person in all of history who was not afraid to lay down his life in love? Even Jesus trembled in fear at the horror of his crucifixion. If we apply our western ideas of love, we are forced to conclude that perhaps Jesus really did not love us, as he had second thoughts about “total commitment.” Can we trust him in the future? Perhaps it is better to call this relationship off and seek a new love. The foolishness of this concept of love should be apparent. What is important is that Jesus persevered through his fear and made the act of the will to lay down his life. The fact that love involves the will is the only thing that allows love to endure through pain, doubt, and even hatred.

As we start to believe that love involves the will, we will notice that we can begin acting freely. When we see the dying, sore-ridden hospital patient, we know that our revulsion is a natural reaction. Now, we can move beyond our feelings and reach out in true love using the will. Our revulsion, even if it is ongoing, no longer torments our thoughts, saying, “Do you really love this person? You don't like how they look or smell. Perhaps you are only doing what is expected of you.” This last statement leads us into “purity of love.” Only God can see the true value of our actions. He knows if we are completely sincere or not. Yet, that is no excuse to quit loving and doing good deeds. As we grow in holiness, our deeds will grow in perfection. All must start small, and all must start somewhere.