

Love your  
neighbor as  
yourself

-Jesus



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

-Br. Charles de  
Foucauld

April, 2006

To my brothers and sisters in Christ,

I pray that your souls are filled with the ever-present, infinite love of God in the midst of this Easter season! It is wonderful to see so many people here in Biloxi with hearts full of confidence that life will triumph over hurricanes and death. The scars of Katrina are still pervasive, and will take many years to heal.

I would like to share a story with you. I wanted to keep it secret, but my spiritual director, Sr. Consilio, insisted that I include it in the newsletter. During my yearly retreat, I was at Mass when the priest of my parish, Fr. Patrick, introduced four Mexican workers who had just arrived in Biloxi. After Mass, following a prompting in my conscience, I asked if they had anywhere to stay. One hour later, I was hurrying to Wal-Mart to buy sleeping mats, blankets, and food! The next week was among the happiest and most stressful of my life. I felt that heady spiritual combination of doing God's will in a difficult matter and the fear of not knowing how long I would have to endure it. The conversations, meals, and struggles that we shared reminded me that all of us are in this together. I must confess that, prior to helping these four Mexicans, I had never recognized my own prejudices that I held against the Mexican people. I was ashamed to see that I never really cared to understand them. I knew of their vast numbers and the unease that their immigration caused, but I never desired to know the faces behind the fears. Yet, in the span of a few days I was sharing my home with them.

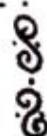
I still don't have any answers regarding illegal immigration, the border problem, and language barriers. But, this experience taught me that though the big problems may never be solved, we must always love those who cross our path, regardless of how they got there. I think Jesus, while he was facing the problems of first-century Palestine, saw things in the same light. He never gave definitive answers regarding the Roman occupation or the Jewish dislike of the Samaritans. He never said, "Rome must be pushed out and the Samaritans embraced!" Instead, he was concerned with the conversion of the individual, be he Roman, Samaritan, or Jew. He also was concerned with loving them. The large issues ebb and fade, but the love of each person is always pressing.

Right now, there is a concerted effort in this country to make it a criminal act to help an illegal alien in any way. The bill in question (you can google for it, I'm sure) makes no clear exception for works of mercy. If the bill were law today, I would be guilty of a felony. Please do what you can to spread awareness of this. Again, I don't have the answer for illegal immigration. But, these are human beings.

May the peace of Jesus never leave you, and may you be continually transformed into his likeness.

In peace and love,  
Matthew

Please send all  
correspondence to: Matthew Manint  
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Prayers are needed and appreciated!  
(no postal fee required)



# meditation

april 2006

As promised way back in August of last year, we will continue our path of meditations by considering the love of God. We perhaps could begin by considering why we should love God, but it is better to ask, "Why does God love me?"

One of the great mysteries of our faith is that God is completely fulfilled in himself. He has no need of people, angels, or any part of creation. You and I neither add to his happiness, nor do we complete him in any way. Yet, here we are! Seeking deeper reasons for our existence, we find that love seeks to give of itself. The all-holy God, who is Love, brought us into existence in order to flood us with his infinite love. He was not required to do so. In fact, it seems strange to think of the All-Powerful One creating a man from dust who could spurn his love. Even more unbelievable, instead of simply abandoning us in our sin or forcing us into obedience, he offered himself in all humility to die in our stead. The creator not only takes on the form of his lowly creation, but also sacrifices himself for it. Who, in our jaded society, could imagine such boundless sacrificial love?

God is so insistent, so desirous of union that he has no qualms about abiding in our souls, creating a tabernacle of the Trinity within our very selves. He is not required to do so. His love is so expansive that he perpetuates the true, glorified, physical reality of his Son, Jesus Christ, in the Holy Eucharist. Every day, we may approach the Flesh of God not only to adore, but also to consume—to bring him into union with our flesh. Again, he is not required to do so. Who, in our tired, sensual society, could ever imagine such wonders occur in every Catholic Church?

What drives God to such extravagances? What does he see that is lovable in me? Certainly, God loves every man and woman that has ever existed. He desires that no man be lost to damnation, but that all be saved. On one level, he loves us because we are made in his own image. He blessed us with an intellect and will so that we might love the truth and move towards it. Even deeper, if we believe in his Son, he sees the image of Jesus in us. As we progress in holiness and respond to his grace, we will draw closer to him. As all of the holiest saints have attested, this relationship will ultimately culminate in a mystical union between the Great Lover and the beloved, until only death remains to remove the last veil.

All are called to this love relationship, and to this union. Only our response decides if we get there.