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Charity



by Rev. Francis J. McPhillips

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THIS IS CHARITY

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BY

REV. FRANCIS J. McPHILLIPS

National Chaplain Newman Club Federation
Ann Arbor, Michigan



National Council of Catholic Men
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Washington 5, D. C.

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WHY BE CHARITABLE?

Talk given on September 5, 1948

When you hear the word "charity," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Some people instinctively reach for their pocketbooks, because to them it means giving something away; others may cringe at the word, because their poverty puts them on the receiving end. But one seldom thinks of a parent's care for his child as charity, or of the relationship between husband and wife as being one of charity, and yet the word can mean nothing other than love.

In looking for examples of charity, the whole animal world must be excluded, because charity belongs only to God and to the creatures He has made who possess supernaturalized souls. Even a portion of the spiritual creation must be excluded, because when they perverted their power to love, the fallen angels became creatures with wills that could be used only to hate.

To have charity, then, is to be like God, because only He and the angels of heaven and we on earth are capable of loving. It is unfortunate that both the words "charity" and "love" have been so abused by men that some-

times a helping hand is held out to an unfortunate person, only after he is first assured that "this is not charity"! Who could imagine a mother caring for her child and constantly telling him that she is not doing it because she loves him? What better motive could there be for giving or accepting help than love for one another? The nobility of man is shown in his ability and willingness to love both God and his neighbor, and one can neither truly love God without loving his neighbor, nor really love his neighbor without being prompted by the love of God. One of the most misunderstood rules of life that was ever given to men is the "Golden Rule," because, when quoted out of its context, it seems to omit the only adequate reason for acting in a generous manner towards one's neighbor. The man who treats his neighbor as he would like to be treated, and for this reason alone, acts from a purely selfish motive, and if there is any love in it, it is only the love of self. To be charitable, then, can only mean that a man guides his decisions and his whole manner of

conduct by his love of God and his neighbor. Should we deny God's right to our love, or make up our minds that our neighbor has forfeited his right to our consideration, no matter what his fault, then we are no longer living as God intended that we should.

We may give generously to the Red Cross and to Community Fund drives, and be known as very generous people, but if the love of God isn't the motive, it won't mean a thing for éternity.

The necessity of loving one another follows from the very fact that we are human beings. God made man to be a social being, to live with others and not to live alone and like it. There have been great saints who fled society and lived as hermits, but every one of them was very vitally concerned with his neighbor—in fact it was their very concern for their neighbors that caused them to flee into desert places. They were so aware of God's love for man and man's lack of return of that love that they sought by lives of prayer to make up in themselves for the coldness of others. They were like children who would pay special attention to a parent sorrowing for the evil life of a wayward son or daughter. To have

had any other reason would not have made them saints—they would rather be subject to condemnation like the man in the Gospel story who buried the talent entrusted to his care.

Men and women who are living their lives today as cloistered monks and nuns are not trying to *escape* their fellowmen, but are trying to *save* them. The more a person lives in the world and for the world, the more difficult it is for him to understand this—but the more one is aware of the very real love that God has for man, the more reasonable it seems.

But the great saints who were hermits, and even the men and women who are living strictly cloistered lives today are a tiny minority among men. Most of us are living very definitely in the world, and we would do well to remind ourselves that our ultimate union with God depends to a very large degree upon the way we live with others. And when we speak here of "others" we mean everyone without exception—the butcher, the boy who delivers the daily paper, the driver of the bus that takes us to work, the lady who lives upstairs, the clerk in the shop where we buy our clothes, the man who carries out the ashes;

and not only the members of our immediate families. There can be no "choice" in this matter of loving others—the revealed Word of God is too explicit to leave doubt in anyone's mind.

St. John was the Apostle who knew the intimate, personal love of Christ on this earth in a way that was second only to the knowledge of Christ's own Mother, and in a letter that he wrote, he had this to say: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not? And this commandment we have from God, that he, who loveth God, love also his brother" (1 *John* 4:20-21). A little earlier in the same letter he wrote: "He that loveth his brother, abideth in light, and there is no scandal in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness" (1 *John* 2:10-11). Surely the darkness that covers the earth today has no other explanation than the lack of charity between nation and nation, people and people, family and family, and even the members of a family, one for the other.

By his very nature, every man alive seeks happiness and peace, but only he who is charitable

shall find it, either in this world or the next. The necessity of being charitable was enjoined on us by the Son of God Himself when He said: "A new commandment I give unto you: That you love one another, as I have loved you, and that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for another" (*John* 13:34-35). And how well the early Christians bore out this teaching is attested by the fact that many times they were identified by the love that they had for each other. Who among us would give himself away today as a Christian by the love that he has and the kindness that he shows for others?

Many people pride themselves on being very good people and call themselves followers of Christ, but they are very careful not to let charity interfere with business or the infringement of their "rights."

Some time ago, I heard a little story that illustrates pretty well this strange contradiction. A young mother with three lively little sons to look after was suddenly aware one afternoon of a deep silence that did not belong in the house when the boys were at home. She made a quick tour of inspection that brought her

before a closed door behind which she heard a piping voice that was trying very hard to be serious, declare, "Now say a Hail Mary, and then I am going to kill you."

Upon opening the door she found one of her young hopefuls standing over the prostrate body of his brother. She interrupted the tragic scene to demand, "What is going on here?" and she was not surprised to have the answer that "We are playing Crime Club."

But when she asked "Why the Hail Mary," she was very much chagrined to have this answer in all seriousness, "Why mother, this is a Catholic Crime Club!" I wonder how many of us have little private crime clubs that we try to make respectable by saying a few prayers and appearing before others as paragons of virtue?

In order to set aside completely any false notions we might have about talking ourselves into heaven, our Lord said very clearly: "Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (*Matthew 7:21*). And it is undoubtedly the will of His Father

that we should be charitable no matter how much it may cost. And it costs plenty! It costs money for an employer to love his employees enough to give them a decent wage; it costs effort for an employee to love his employer enough to give him an honest day's work; it costs a great deal of self-control to avoid an argument, even at home, when you know that you are right; it may even seem that you are sacrificing self-respect when you learn that someone has said something particularly vicious about you and you try to love him anyway, but there are simply no exceptions to this law of love. And it costs so much because it isn't enough to give out with a toothy smile or try to develop a sort of Pollyanna disposition that "overlooks" the faults or shortcomings of others—we have to look right at their failures and *still* love them.

Is this asking too much of human nature? It would be asking too much of an animal to expect him to sit quietly with an enemy—newspapers print pictures of the rare occasions when natural enemies of the animal kingdom get along together. But it is precisely because we are *human*, with spiritual souls and an eternal destiny, that we

must pay what it costs to be charitable. It is only when men will become truly charitable that we can hope for lasting peace in the world.

Can you imagine a peace treaty that could fail if the leaders of men would sit at the table with charity in their hearts instead of determined minds not to let their "rights" be infringed? There has never been a war in history that was not caused by the lack of charity on somebody's part, and the rea-

son for the failure of peace plans is that they are not founded on charity. And to get right down to our own little lives, there has never been a family squabble that was not caused by a lack of charity, and there isn't a single person alive who would be mad at anybody if he had charity in his heart. Let men love God and show this love by their attitude towards their neighbors, and then there will be peace among nations, peace in families, and peace and happiness in every individual's life.

CHARITY IN JUDGMENT

Talk given on September 12, 1948

A few years ago, I visited a priest friend of mine who was working in a Negro mission in the South. He told me of the cooperation he received from every side, and was convinced that much of the prejudice that had hampered the work of others in the field was dying out. One evening we were in a city some distance from his mission and stopped at a hotel for dinner. It was quite late and the coffee-shop was almost deserted as we entered, but there were two men sitting at a table who seemed to take a marked interest in the sight of two priests coming in to eat. One of them in particular stared at us as we entered, and even went so far as to put his arm on the back of his chair as he turned towards us that he might make what appeared to us to be an unhurried appraisal of these strange creatures. We were most uncomfortable, but made no remark until both men had left their table to seek the cashier's desk, and then my friend told me that this was the first time in five years that he had been so insulted. I still remember his saying that it was

a typical example of "bigotry," and I agreed that it had been a rather tense situation.

Then we began to prepare for a real "scene," because the men had turned and were approaching our table! Bracing ourselves for whatever was going to happen, and giving back stare for stare, we heard the insulting stranger ask my friend "if he was from Cleveland"—and when he replied that he was from Detroit and that he was working with the Negroes in the South, we could hardly believe our ears when we heard the stranger say that he thought he had met my friend in Cleveland where his son was living, and his son was a *priest!* When he first began to look in our direction, we could have avoided all our distress and unpleasant thoughts by the simple process of saying, "Good evening," but subconsciously we must have been looking for trouble, and we certainly found it where the exact opposite was intended. This isn't a very complimentary story to tell about one's self, but it does illustrate the ease and the evil of making uncharitable judgments.

Making a judgment is simply the process of putting a couple of ideas together and arriving at a conclusion—like deciding that two and two are four. The trouble is that often what looks like a two is some other number and the result is an error. *What* people do and say can be very evident, but *why* they do it is not evident as a rule—and it is the *why* and not the *what* that is so important.

One's friend can call him names and offer him ridicule and he won't mind a bit, because he has made the judgment that he is a friend—but let someone that has been judged to be unfriendly as much as accent the wrong syllable in his name and he is ready for a fight! There seems to be just one basic reason for these strange reactions we have towards others, and that is pride. We don't like to be "taken in," do we? We all have a horror of letting someone else "get away with something."

If one cultivates the habit of always being kind in his judgments, the chances are that he will be taken advantage of at times, but isn't it better to be a little bit gullible than to be cynical? The one who refuses to try to be a mindreader and to look for some hidden and unkind

reason for the actions of others, may lay himself open to a few poisoned barbs, but he will most certainly be a happier person than the cynic who wraps himself up in his own pride.

Since we have intellects we are constantly making judgments, and it is not easy to be always charitable in those judgments—but if it were easy to be always charitable, what merit would there be in the sight of God? Our Divine Saviour knew of this weakness of ours in making bad judgments and had something very pertinent to say about it. In the Sermon on the Mount as recorded by St. Matthew He said: "Judge not, that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye" (*Matthew 7:1-5*).

There is certainly no law against judging one's self, and there is great spiritual profit in that, but as soon as we set ourselves up as judges over others,

we are bound to be in trouble. It would be acting directly contrary to the teaching of Christ to judge even if we were always right—but how often we are wrong! Having prejudiced a person to be friendly, it is comparatively easy to find an excuse to defend all his actions—but having prejudged him to have some unpleasant traits of character, it is practically impossible to find good in anything that he does.

I remember a story that was told to me years ago by a workman in a boy's camp in the North woods. I had commented on his constant good nature and his seemingly boundless charity for others, and he told me that one time when he was a small boy he had a particularly vicious quarrel with another youngster in the neighborhood, and the hostilities were interrupted only by the arrival of the parish priest on the scene. The other little fellow fled as soon as the priest appeared, but my friend felt that he was so right that he stayed to explain to the Father how completely obnoxious a character the other boy was.

The priest listened for a few minutes and then abruptly changed the subject by inviting the boy into the church orchard to pick some apples. When the

boy reappeared loaded down with the fruit, he was asked if he had any bad apples, and when he denied that he did, "because he hadn't looked for any," he learned the lesson that he had never forgotten. The wise pastor told him that there were plenty of bad apples on the ground but that he had overlooked them in his search for the good ones, and he told the little lad that if he would look for good apples in the orchards of other people's lives, they were always to be found.

Making good judgments does not mean that we have to be foolish and deliberately distort facts in order to make them appear other than what they actually are. The first essential is at least the beginnings of true humility and a forgiving spirit. We are sometimes inclined to forget that in order to forgive, we actually have to be wronged. When we are subject to correction, or comment is made on our faults, we cannot forgive the critic because we have not been unjustly criticized. How often we hear someone say: "I want to be charitable, but if you only knew what she said about me!" No one could qualify as an enemy unless he was deliberately unfair, could he? And yet Christ

used precisely that word in telling us whom we were to forgive. "I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you" (*Matthew* 5:44). This is a command from Christ, and He has made it very evident that we can best show our love for God by the way that we love our neighbor—and how can a man even begin to love anyone if he constantly mistrusts his motives?

I doubt that many of us have even one person in our lives that we could call an enemy, but how far do we go in trying to love even those whom we just plain do not like? What overtures of kindness do we make to the people who are so annoying at times? And we might have to look pretty diligently to find a person who has real hate in his heart towards us, but what good have we found ourselves doing to those persons who were reported to have said some unkind things about us?

When our Lord spoke of enemies and people who hate, He was speaking of the worst possible condition, and it goes without saying that He expects us to have kindness in our hearts toward everyone. There is no matter of choice about it—Christ told us without any reser-

vation that if we want Him, we will have to take Him together with all those whom we do not like, and those who we think do not like us. And it is going to be a lot easier to have a proper disposition toward others if we avoid uncharitable judgments and give them the advantage of every doubt.

There were incidents during the war when enemy soldiers came forward with gestures of surrender, but they were bearing hidden weapons which destroyed their captors. As a result, it wasn't long before every sign was mistrusted, and probably many an enemy soldier was killed who really wanted to give himself up. But that was war, and men's lives were being lived out in an atmosphere of strife. None of us wants conflict in our daily lives, and yet it is impossible to avoid it if we are going to sit in judgment on the people with whom we live. Isn't there enough trouble to face every day, without making more for ourselves? We bitterly resent being misunderstood by others, but by a strange contradiction we reserve the right to do what we condemn in them.

It would be bad enough if this matter of judging others concerned only the people whose

lives we touch rather casually, but it is fatal to happiness when it creeps into family life. How can there be tranquil happiness in the home where a wife is suspicious of her husband, or where the husband lacks complete confidence in his wife? The very air of mistrust that pervades that home spells doom to any hope of true happiness. Charity not only begins at home, it begins in the minds of those who make the home.

We may pride ourselves, if we will, on being clever enough not ever to have anything put over on us, and question the motives of everyone so that we will always be very sure of our position—and live unhappily. Or we may relax a little, and, recognizing our own shortcomings, be ready to forgive quickly even the evident faults of others, and find happiness.

CHARITY IN SPEECH

Talk given on September 19, 1948

One of the treasured remembrances of high school days is the annual junior-senior banquet. It was an occasion when the juniors entertained the seniors, and though it was always spoken of as the Banquet, most of the time for preparation was spent on the dramatic skits which followed the dinner. And according to tradition, this entertainment planned for the honored guests followed the single idea of making fun of them.

The year that we were juniors, our party was almost ruined by a clever speech given at the dinner by the senior president, who reminded us that no one likes to have criticized the things he has done or the things he has made, and he insisted that even seniors had been made by God, and therefore we should be very careful in what we would have to say about them!

The whole mood of the party was one of gaiety, and as far as I can remember, no one was hurt by what was done or said about him. But I think that the remark of the boy who represented his class bit down through the veneer of fun and would have had a marked effect upon all our lives if we had really thought out

its implications. For every man, woman and child who is breathing *is* the work of God, and dearly loved by Him, and almost always when we criticize the man, we criticize the Maker.

One seldom has the heart to tell a man that he does not like his garden, or the house he has built, or the car he has bought—but there seems to be no check on the vicious comments made about the creatures of God. In all creation, only man has the power of speech, and it is a gift that was intended by God to be used for His honor and glory, both directly, in praising Him through prayers, and indirectly by its proper use in relation to His creatures. It was certainly never intended to be used against Him, nor to be a faculty that should be abused to bring unhappiness into the lives of others. And yet unkindness in speech is a common fault and sometimes it seems that if there were a way of making it impossible to say an unkind word, some people would be practically mutes. There is no way in which charity is so sinned against, as in speech. And like most faults, it is like a weed which grows so much faster than the worthwhile plants of virtue—and sometimes

grows undetected until it has such a vigorous root that it is very difficult to stamp out.

If one looks about for the seed that is responsible for the ugly weed of uncharitable speech, he will quickly come to the conclusion that it is "gossip." We never hear of a gardener who would deliberately transplant a weed to his garden, but unless there is constant vigilance, the tiniest seed will begin to grow—and even the man who would scorn a deliberate attack on his neighbor will find it difficult to avoid all idle talk. The most unfounded rumor, or the suggestion of fault in another that can be laughed about, at the time, appears like a living thing that will grow like a parasite when there is apparently no chance for survival.

Often the most damaging beginning is only an implication, or a lifted eyebrow, and the unfortunate thing is that so many people who are earnestly striving to live good lives, and try with great zeal to avoid every other sort of vice, let the bad habit of uncharitable speech grow as though it did not matter. Why is it that people who are so determined never to do an injustice to another in the matter of material things—who

would walk blocks to correct a mistake that had been made by a clerk who had given them just a few cents too much in change—will rob even their best friends of what is so much more important, their good name? I am very sure that most people would rather have their purses lifted than to have their characters maligned. It makes it worse, of course, to tell what is untrue; but true or false, it is a sin against God to say an unkind thing about one's neighbor. I have a right to my property, and because I offer something that I possess to another, it does not mean that I am throwing it away to be picked up by anyone at all. And if I should do something that is really bad, and so forfeit my good name to one person, it does not mean that that person has a right to tell others and so ruin my reputation in their eyes.

Often in these intimate conversations where the good name of another gets a going-over, a warning is given by the narrator when he prefaces his remarks by saying: "I know I shouldn't say this, but—," and then launches into the attack. There is something here that reminds one of the snake that gives warning with its rattle before it

strikes—the noise of the rattler takes away nothing from the sting of its bite!

Sometimes it is necessary for the good of another to disclose his fault to someone who can help him, or protect others—but those instances are relatively very rare. We could have a rule that the only time that one is free to disclose the faults of another is when he has the obligation to do so. There is a story told about St. Philip Neri, who was aware of the damage that was being done by a woman who was constantly analyzing and discussing her neighbors. According to the legend, he asked her one day to buy a chicken for him at the public market and made the request that she should pluck its feathers on the way home. Being anxious to please, she did a very good job of fulfilling this strange request and arrived at the home of the saint with her face beaming and a well-plucked bird in her hands. Imagine her consternation when he very calmly asked her if she would be kind enough to go back and pick up the feathers!

When she pointed out to him the utter impossibility of being able to do that, he asked her what she would ever be able to do about recalling the unkind

things that she had said about others. If the feathers had been carried away with the wind beyond any hope of recovery, who could tell where the uncharitable remarks and insinuations about her neighbors had come to rest?

All charitableness of speech is not confined to remarks *about* others by any means — these tongues of ours can rip and tear happiness apart even at home when we are talking *to* the people we must love in all the world. And unlike swords, our tongues do not dull with use but rather take on a keener edge. And the variety of forms in which we can hurt others with speech is endless. One of the strangest contradictions in human relations is the mother who works tirelessly for her family, urged on by the deepest love for them, and spoils it all by a constant complaining.

And another is the great regard we have for the feelings of strangers and the utter disregard we are apt to have for the ones we most love. It wouldn't be difficult to imagine a young lady who had been shopping all day being jostled and crowded on the way home on the bus, and tired and completely worn out making a good effort to be civil to the awkward person who steps on her foot. She has never seen

him before and will be perfectly content if she never does again, but she must be a lady at all costs. Why does the attitude have to change so completely as soon as she steps into her own home? How does she speak to those who make up her very life? If the little brother who has been so anxiously awaiting her return shows some impatience about getting at her packages, isn't it strange that she should have to speak so sharply to him?

And just let her mother say that dinner is going to be a little late, and she is very apt to speak to her as no lady would to a stranger on the bus! There is only one solution to this problem, and that is that if one's patience is so very limited, it should be rationed!

But we would be making a mistake to think that charity in speech demands only that we never say unkind things. Why cannot that faculty of speech be used to bring actual happiness to others? There is no law against uttering a word of praise occasionally, and there isn't one of us who does not get a lift from a word of commendation and encouragement. If we so love to have others say pleasant things to us, shouldn't it work both

ways? This doesn't mean developing any habit of flattery, but rather simply that when we notice something good about another, we remark about it in all honesty and sincerity. In too many families the only approval given by the members to one another is the lack of criticism.

Why are we so vocal when we note a fault, and so silent when there is chance to praise? Humility is a great virtue and we should do everything that we can to develop it to its highest degree, but our first concern should be with making it the foundation virtue in our own lives—and the risk of making another proud because of a kind word of commendation is really very small. In every field of advertising we learn of the wonderful effects that can be achieved in just a few days by the use of a particular kind of cosmetic—for truly wonderful effects in adding happiness to your own life and bringing it to the lives of others, just try substituting commendation for condemnation for a few days.

It would be reason enough to be always charitable in speech just for the peace of mind that it brings and for the happiness that it radiates to others. But let it be because of love for

God, and we will be laying up treasures for ourselves for eternity. It is only really hard to be kind when we feel that we have been in some way the victim of others, and for an adequate reason to overcome even that difficulty, we have the prom-

ise of Christ: "For if you will forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you also your offenses. But if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses" (*Matthew 6:14-15*).

CHARITY IN PRAYER

Talk given on September 26, 1948

One seldom speaks of charity and power in the same breath, because the terms, as we use them, are so unalterably opposed to each other. Where there is charity, power in the sense of tyranny is forgotten; but where there is no charity, then power alone holds sway. The rule of charity is one of love and forbearance, while the rule of power is one of fear and oppression. Since there is so little charity in the world, we hear much more of the power that men possess; and nations stand on the brink of war, hesitating only because of the doubt as to which country controls the greater force.

Outshining every means for destruction that man has produced, stands the atom bomb—it is the ultimate in material force, and even the men who possess its secret, stand in awe of its potentialities. But it is only the greatest material force, and if it were a thousand times more powerful than it is, it would still be less, infinitely less, than the power of the One who set up the laws by which it operates. Responsible as it is, for the great-

est single act of destruction that man has ever accomplished, its mighty blast is like the tap of a hammer compared to *spiritual* power.

Knowledge of intricate physical laws; possession of vast wealth; construction of complicated machinery and willingness to undergo extraordinary risk, are all needed to produce the bomb. But simple faith in God; poverty of spirit; humility, and a willingness to submit one's self to the benign providence of God, are all that are needed to put into anyone's hands a greater power. Fifty years ago, the power of the atom was unknown to men generally, but it existed; and today the general ignorance of men does nothing to lessen the unbelievable power of prayer. Refinements of construction may widen the area that can be devastated by the bomb, but who would claim for it the power to move a mountain?

In our consideration of charity, it would be a mistake to think of it only in terms of making proper judgments, and avoiding unkindness toward others—

because the means for the greatest charity of all lies in the power of prayer. True charity can exist only in the atmosphere of prayer, and we can be always charitable, only when we always pray. Charity is not something that can be turned on and off like a water-tap—being a virtue, it is something that must be developed; and just as physical strength is developed by continually overcoming weakness, so the virtue of charity arises from our repeated efforts to overcome our natural weakness in this matter.

Just “willing” to be charitable is not enough; we must be aided by the grace of God, and that grace will come only through prayer. Have you ever had a friend, in a moment of confidence, tell you that he cannot understand why he finds it so difficult to be charitable? The answer probably lies in the fact that he recognizes the value of charity; would sincerely like to be charitable; but that he never humbly *prays* for an increase in the virtue. For to be truly charitable, we must pray for the virtue in our own lives, and pray for good to come to others.

High upon the list of those for whom we should pray are those who are nearest to us.

If we would only *pray* for them as much as we *worry* about them! To worry about their problems and not to pray about them is as foolish as it would be to own a million dollars and worry about the needs of others without ever spending a dime to help them. In no word of Revelation is there a single restriction placed upon the use of the power of prayer.

One Hail Mary, offered with full confidence in the mercy of God, is worth more than any amount of distracted worrying; and a few minutes on one's knees is worth more than hours of wakeful tossing in bed. It is because we love our dear ones that we wish them well and are inclined to worry about them, and if we would only learn to express that love in prayer, our minds would be more at peace, and we would be helping them beyond measure. Why shouldn't we pray that the burdens of those we love might be lighter, or that extra strength be given to bear them? Such a prayer is an act of love, both for God and our neighbor, and He will never let it go unanswered.

To pray for those we love should need no urging—one just naturally talks about the ones that mean most to him, and in

talking to God, there should be no exception. But how about those that we find it difficult to love? Because there are differences in taste, there is variety in the world—and no one is condemned for not liking everything that appeals to his neighbor. And in this case, what applies to spinach, applies to men as well—people are different, and just as one may have a distaste for a certain food, so he may find himself with a natural antipathy towards another person.

Here there is no question of active resentment or hate in any form, but one just finds it difficult to like the other. What is to be done about it in the face of the command of Christ to love one another? Prayer offers a wonderful solution because it not only enables us to see another more clearly as a child of God, but early prayer for such a person helps to dispel the natural dislike and keeps any uncharitable disposition toward him from “jelling” into a hard and fast condition.

Have you ever tried to stay angry at a person for whom you have honestly and sincerely prayed? It cannot be done, no matter what insult he may have offered you. And there are two reasons for this—the first is

that the grace of God is never denied to such a prayer and though it may seem impossible, humanly speaking, to forgive a grievous wrong, something of the all-forgiving spirit of God Himself seems to communicate itself to the one so praying. And the second reason is that when I lift my mind and heart to God in prayer, I begin to see more clearly that the only really important thing in life is my relationship to Him, and what others have done to me fades into insignificance compared to what I have done to Him.

It takes no formal prayer to ask God to be good to the one who has done me a wrong, but unless I pray for him from the bottom of my heart I will be nothing less than a hypocrite every time that I murmur the Lord's Prayer. How can we cherish resentment toward another and ask God to “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?”

Our Divine Saviour foresaw all the vexations of spirit that we would have; He knew that there would be times when there would be plenty of reasons for us to be angry and resentful because of very real wrongs, and He still said to us: “You have heard that it hath been said,

Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you: That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matthew 5:43-48*).

In every consideration of charity, the presumption is that others may offer insult and injury to us, but we are apt to forget our many failures as far as others are concerned. When the unkind word is spoken we have no more control over it than the archer has over the arrow after it has left the bow—but he may bind up the wound he has caused; and we not only *may*, but we *must* undo the damage that we have done by our unkindness.

Here there is no substitute for prayer, because once having given reason for resentment we are responsible for its results in an-

other, and may even have been the occasion for his sinning against charity. A word of apology may smooth over ruffled feelings, but it takes the grace of God to undo all the damage caused and prayer alone secures that. Since the power of prayer is unlimited by time or distance, the almost forgotten wrong that has left a barb in the heart of another can still be remedied. It is not always possible to repay a debt in money because I may have lost track of the debtor, but the whereabouts of the one I have wronged is no secret to God, and though I cannot know just how He will adjust the wrong, I know that He will if I pray. In particular this applies to those for whose sins we may have been in any way responsible—we owe this prayer in justice as well as in charity.

It is not an unusual thing to have a person say that he does not pray any more because he has lost his Faith—it would be more honest to say that he has lost his Faith because he stopped praying. And it would be safe to conclude that he stopped praying, only because he lost sight of its value and began to limit its power by his own lack of confidence. A child begins to pray by including in his prayers

his whole world—he often mentions by name every person that he knows, and the father or mother who is listening to those prayers is sometimes startled by the strange requests that occur to the childish mind.

It is only as he grows older that he begins to limit his prayers to the welfare of a chosen few, and the habit of prayer that is formed becomes narrow and limited—he begins to think that God is not interested in the little things that he used to talk about to Him, and for some unknown reason he develops the view that unless he is personally acquainted with someone he cannot pray for him.

I wonder how often he offers a prayer for the boy in another grade who is in trouble—probably as often as we pray for the criminal whose crime we read about in the daily paper. The only limit to the power of prayer is the limit that we ourselves

place on it. Our prayers, like our charity, should be all-inclusive, and we can be very sure that they are not thinned out by spreading them over a wide area. We do not have to be statesmen to pray for the welfare of our country, and if all who are worrying about the international situation would earnestly pray for its happy solution, there would be no doubt about the outcome.

Our Blessed Redeemer gave us the formula for salvation by telling us that we must love God above all things, and our neighbors as ourselves; and in the Second Epistle of St. John the Apostle we find the note upon which we might well conclude this consideration of charity: “And now I beseech thee . . . not as writing a new commandment to thee, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. And *this is charity*, that we walk according to his commandments” (2 John 1:5-6).

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