

CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN MAY 15, 2022



Dear Folks,

In our Gospel Jesus says, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another (John 13:34).” Sounds very nice, doesn’t it? It should scare us.

The command to love was not new, way back in Leviticus, we are told to “love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18).” What is new is to love one another as He has loved us, and He loved us infinitely and perfectly.

We are called to love everyone, without exception. This means seeking their greatest good. First, we need the strength of soul to be willing to do this. Secondly, we need some ideal of what is really going to do good. That requires being attentive, and willing to continue to learn about what is really going to help. You may have experienced people who want to help you, but they have pre-determined what they are going to do, and it is not going to be helpful for you. In fact, it is causing you trouble. Then they get mad because you are not appreciative or cooperative in their intended benevolence. This is not love.

Love does not always mean doing what people want. We do not love people by affirming, agreeing with or enabling their sinful behavior. They may accuse you of being unloving, but we remember that God loves all people; He does not love all behaviors. This does not always mean doing what people want or appreciate. Think about when He made a whip of cords and drove the moneychangers, the buyers and the sellers out of the temple. I expect they did not feel loved at that moment.

I have said repeatedly that we don’t ask if someone deserves help; we ask what is the most helpful thing to do? This means there are two separate issues: our willingness to help, and our understanding of what is the most helpful. People tend to be satisfied with having good intentions and presume it is obviously true that they are helping. My mother was a nurse, and she told me about how they used to do bloodletting for pneumonia patients (long before her time, of course). Pneumonia, of course interferes with taking in oxygen, and blood is what brings oxygen from the lungs to the parts of the body, so less blood is the worst thing for them. The doctors who did this most certainly believed they were doing good, and God certainly recognized that. We do not condemn the intentions of their hearts nor call their actions sinful, but recognize their behavior was still wrong.

Many times I see some version of, “you don’t support what I think would be helpful, therefore you don’t care about helping.” I’ve seen this a lot in the gun control debate, and I’m seeing it a lot in the abortion debate. It hampers the conversation and hampers it really badly.

As we seek to love one another as Jesus loves us, let us ask God (1) for a more loving heart, (2) the clarity of vision to see what we can do that serves the good of others, and (3) the wisdom to participate helpfully and productively in disagreements about #2.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim