



03. November 2021

Love and do whatever you want

Lk 10:1-9

Brothers: 'The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law. All these: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love can cause no harm to your neighbour, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law.'

St. Augustine left us this wonderful maxim: "Love and do what you want." Indeed, when we love we have understood the essential of our life. When we love, we correspond to the deepest reason for our existence, which is to be loved by God. And our love for our neighbour is the concrete manifestation of God's love for us; it is the consequence of being loved by God. Who would be capable of closing his heart to his brother, knowing that he himself is infinitely loved? If we truly love - which is not the same as desiring - then it will be love that tells us what we have to do. In this sense we can understand St. Augustine's affirmation.

However, we must remind ourselves again and again what this love consists of and how it can be put into practice; because Augustine's maxim - although it sounds wonderful - is not so easy to apply correctly. Often our capacity to love is hindered by self-love. And overcoming the latter is one of the most arduous spiritual battles, for self-love accompanies us everywhere, as if it were our shadow.

Now, there is a love that is ordered to oneself, for each person takes care of his body, his health, etc. And this has its justification! In fact, Sacred Scripture tells us: "*You shall love your neighbour as yourself*", taking self-love as the parameter of love of neighbour.

But disordered self-love exceeds the measure set by God, and is capable of seeking its own interest without thinking either of others or of God. Unfortunately, this is an inheritance left to us by original sin, when man departed from the divine commands, thus wounding the love of God. As a consequence of this disordered self-love, shortly after the original fall, the first fratricide in human history took place, when Cain murdered his brother Abel (Gen 4:1-12).

"*If you love me you will keep my commandments*" the Lord tells us (Jn 14:15), and he himself explains to us in greater depth the meaning of those commandments (cf. Mt 5:21-48). Evil acts are preceded by unrestrained desire, and if we yield to it, sin is engendered (Jas 1:15).

On the other hand, if we allow the Holy Spirit, who is the love between the Father and

the Son, to work in us, then He will make us aware of our disordered desires and offer us His help to overcome them, for love is incapable of harming our neighbour. We do not want to hurt the love of God or the love of our neighbour!

Therefore, our greatest spiritual longing should be to constantly grow in love. Every day we are presented with many opportunities to do so. Through prayer and by living with our eyes fixed on God and attentive to His guidance, we can discover more and more of His love and welcome it more and more deeply within ourselves. This love, in turn, will want to be communicated to others through the proclamation of divine love and through concrete works of charity. Just as God comes to meet us and shows us His love, we are called to treat our brothers and sisters. For this, God himself will be our teacher!