

2. October 2025

## He who loves God should love his brother also

1 Jn 4:17-21

*In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.*

When we welcome God's love, His Spirit can take up residence in our hearts. Indeed, He is the love of God poured into our hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5). He spreads His beauty, warmth and brilliant light within us. Since love wants to reign within us, it immediately gets to work. If we cooperate with His work, He will begin to illuminate the shadows of our soul, inviting us to follow His impulses and detach ourselves from anything contrary to love. In Christian mysticism, this process is called the 'purgative way'<sup>1</sup>.

The key is to learn to remain constantly in love so that it can grow. If we do not cultivate it, however, it can grow cold. Conversely, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, He will always guide us towards acts of love and encourage us to continue working in our hearts so that His presence occupies more and more of us.

This work in our hearts is invaluable. Fr Lallement, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Jesuit spiritual master, even said that 'if we succeed in overcoming our dominant defect, we will have achieved more than if we had built an apostolic work'. The spiritual seriousness contained in these words is evident. Therefore, as far as possible, we must, with God's help, rid ourselves of everything that hinders the growth of love and, therefore, its fruitfulness.

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<sup>1</sup> In the "3 Minutes for Abba" from September 25 to 27, I briefly addressed the three "ways" of the spiritual path, based on a prayer by St. Nicholas of Flüe:

1. Purgative way: <https://en.elijamission.net/my-lord-and-my-god-take-from-me-everything-that-keeps-me-from-you/>
2. Illuminative way: <https://en.elijamission.net/give-me-everything-that-brings-me-closer-to-you/>
3. Unitive way: <https://en.elijamission.net/let-me-no-longer-be-mine-but-entirely-yours/>

As love grows in our hearts, we will gradually lose the false fear we may have about God. Trust will have been consolidated, the naturalness of love will have given us security and we will have become convinced that God's loving heart is always open to us. We have frequently encountered His patience and mercy, and experienced His saving hand and wise guidance time and again. Thus, we no longer fear God's punishment, but rejoice at the prospect of being with Him in eternity.

This does not mean that we can be careless in our dealings with the Lord or with our neighbour, lulling ourselves into a false sense of security. Sacred Scripture exhorts us: *'let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall'* (1 Cor 10:12). However, St John's words give us hope: *'In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment'*.

Free from human optimism, levity or even pride, confidence in the Day of Judgement is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us. It leads us to be certain of God's goodness. This certainty illuminates our lives and gives them a clear purpose, while encouraging us to put into practice all the works that bear witness to God's love for humanity. However, it also makes us aware that we must preserve this divine work within us and strive to respond more subtly to God's will. Therefore, it keeps us vigilant in relation to our own spiritual life and, even more so, to all the opportunities that God grants us to practise and demonstrate love.

The First Letter of St John refers repeatedly to love for one's brother. This is, so to speak, the test that shows whether God's love truly dwells in us. The Apostle sums it up in these clear words: *'If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.'*

The inevitable conclusion is that *'he who loves God should love his brother also'*.

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**Meditation on the day's reading (Memorial of the Holy Guardian Angels):**

<https://en.elijamission.net/to-obey-the-angel/>

**Meditation on the day's Gospel:** <https://en.elijamission.net/children-and-angels-2/>