

DOCTRINAL CLASS (5)

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CONJUGIAL LOVE

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Conjugal love is from the marriage of the Lord and His Church. It is only those who live in the Lord and in His Church who can be in love truly Conjugal. But what is the Lord's New Church? and how are we to believe in it?

We read that "the Divine of the Lord makes heaven and the angels constitute it." In the same way it may be said that the Divine of the Lord makes the Church and the men and women of the Church constitute it. The Lord's Church is therefore a visible Church; man can no more be conjoined to an invisible Church than he can be conjoined to an invisible God.

All who are of the Church are born from the Lord as their Father and the Church as their Mother; all such are therefore spiritual brothers and sisters.

But who are of the Church and who therefore constitute the Church? We are told in the Word that there are those who are in the Church, but are not of the Church, such do not constitute the Church. The true Church is in a spiritual organic form, in which each man who is truly of the Church has his spiritual place. But this place can only be seen by those who have their spiritual eyes opened.

The Church is not constituted of those who are bound together in natural affection for each other from having a common natural affection for the things of the Church. Such a binding together from natural affections forms what is called in the Word "the friendship of love" and is opposed to spiritual charity. Wherefore those who are so bound together, although they may be in the Church are not of the Church. And if we mistake those bound together in the friendship of love, based on a natural affection for the things of the Church, for the Church itself then we cannot see the Church itself.

The word Church in the Latin is ecclesia, from roots meaning to call forth. The Church with man consists of those things which have been called forth by the Lord, and elevated above man's merely personal things, and have been brought into a genuine human form from the Lord. The true Church in common is constituted of the things of the Church with the men and women of the Church, which have been called forth by the Lord and have received the human form from Him.

The Church must therefore be seen as being on an interior plane, above that of the merely personal things of the men and women who are in the Church.

What should our relation be to those who are in the Church and are fellow members? If our spiritual eyes were opened so that we could see the Church and the men of the Church as it really is the answer would be self-evident. But at present the plane of the Church is either not seen or is seen very obscurely. It may be said that none of us are actually established in that plane. Our essential relationship therefore depends on whether we are looking for that plane of life; whether we are willing to leave the plane of life on which we have been living in order to come to that new plane of life. But who is looking towards the new plane of life, and who is willing to leave the old plane of life, is by no means clear at present. What then should our present relation between ourselves be?

We cannot as yet look upon it as the internal brotherhood which is of spiritual charity, in which everyone knows his true relationship to each other. Our attitude should indeed be one of friendly assistance, of trying to help each other to see and come to the plane of life where we can internally dwell together.

But this help must be wise.

We are taught in the Word that good or love alone would introduce all into heaven, while truth alone would condemn all to hell. Both of these are equally bad; for if the evil were introduced into heaven they would profane it and finally destroy it, making it into an imaginary heaven which is worse than hell.

A man who is in good or love alone, draws all to him; such would introduce all into the Church, and would attempt to persuade all in the Church to come to a higher plane of life no matter how unprepared they were.

Those who are in truth alone see that no man is worthy of the kingdom of heaven or of the Church, such therefore judge all without mercy. Both good or love alone and truth or faith alone, are from self and have self in them. That truth or faith alone is evil is more evident for it is hard, cold and harsh. That good or love alone is equally evil is not so evident, for it appears mild and gentle, and the merit and self love which are in it usually do not appear. Because good or love alone appears mild and beautiful the evil it contains is with greater difficulty acknowledged and shunned. The evil of merit, that is in it, holds the will bound more than truth or faith alone.

This may be illustrated in another way. Compare the miser and the overly generous man. The miser does comparatively little harm except to himself. The overly generous often harms the lives of many.

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The miser, as a rule, has not much self merit, for he is not flattered nor can he so readily set up his vice as a virtue. The overly generous are flattered and praised, they look upon their vice as good and take the greatest pleasure in this. Both of these opposites are equally from the love of self, but, if any thing, the evil of over generosity is the more difficult to overcome. A man may indeed be overly generous from a lack of prudence or discretion, and this may not be serious. The serious case is where a man is not willing to be better instructed, but clings to his evil as a virtue, and glories in it, as a good. The same law which applies to a miser and an overly generous man in relation to natural wealth also applies to a miser and the indiscriminately and overly generous man in the things of spiritual wealth.

Again the man who is in good alone is fond of the story of the prodigal son, and thinks he models his life on this parable; but he forgets that in the story of the prodigal son that the father did not go after the son to persuade him to return, nor did he send a messenger or any help. While indeed the fathers love was within him, he could not manifest it until the son reflected on his ways and their consequence, and in repentance and in the greatest humility returned, not with the hope of being taken back as a son, but as one of his fathers servants. The man in good alone would have no such patience, but would go out to persuade the son to return, and would immediately manifest his love with the result that no proper preparation for a genuine conjunction would be possible.

The following quotation concerning parents and children, in principle, applies not only to parents and children but to all human relationship including friends, and in a more interior sense it applies to all affections, thoughts and works which are brought forth in a natural state. It applies particularly to those who have been in the relation of fathers and sons in a natural state of the Church, fathers in the Church being instructors, teachers, priests, in relation to sons who are students, followers, members of the congregation. On account of the importance of the subject we quote at length: "That the love of infants is of one kind with spiritual partners and of another with natural. To appearance the love of infants with spiritual partners is similar to the love of infants with natural partners, but it is more internal and thus more tender, because that love exists from innocence, and from a nearer reception, and thus a more present reception of it with themselves; for the spiritual are spiritual in the degree that they partake of innocence. But spiritual fathers and mothers, after they have tasted the sweetness of innocence with their infants, love their children altogether otherwise than natural fathers and mothers.

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The spiritual love their children according to their spiritual intelligence and moral life; thus they love them according to their fear of God and their actual piety, or piety of life, and at the same time according to their affection for, and application to uses serviceable to society, that is, according to virtues and good morals with them. It is principally from these things that they provide for them and minister to their necessities. Wherefore, if they do not see such virtues in them they alienate their mind from them, and do nothing for them except from duty.

With natural fathers and mothers the love of infants is indeed also from innocence, but this innocence received by them, is wrapped about their proprial love, and thence it is from the latter and at the same time from the former that they love their infants, kissing and embracing them, carrying them about, taking them to their bosoms and fondling them beyond all measure, and looking on them as one heart and one soul with themselves. And then, after their state of infancy up to adolescence and beyond, when innocence no longer operates, they love them, not on account of any actual fear of God and actual piety, or piety of life, nor for any rational and moral intelligence with them, and but little, - scarcely at all, do they have regard to their internal affections and thence to virtues and good morals, but only to things external which they favor. To these they adjoin, affix, and firmly attach their love, and thence close their eyes to the faults of their children, by excusing and favoring them. The reason is that the love of their progeny, with them, is also the love of themselves, and this love clings to the subject outwardly, but does not enter into it, as self does not enter into itself.

The quality of the love of infants and the love of children with the spiritual and the natural, is manifestly perceived from them after death. For most fathers, when they come into the world of spirits, call to mind their children, who have died before them, and they also become present to and recognize each other. Spiritual fathers only look at them, ask in what state they are, rejoice if it is well with them, and grieve if it is ill; and after some conversation, instruction and admonition respecting celestial moral life, they separate themselves from them, but before separation teach that they are no longer to be remembered as fathers, because the Lord is the only Father to all in heaven - and that they never remember them as their children.

But natural fathers, as soon as they realize that they are living after death and recall to their memory the children who had died before them, and who are also presented before them according to the strength of their desire, are instantly conjoined with them, and they cling together like a bundle of sticks tied together; and then the father is continually delighted at the sight of them

and by conversation with them. If the father is told that some of these his children are satans, and that they have done injury to the good, never-the-less he keeps them together in the sphere about him or in a company before him. If he himself sees that they inflict injury and do evil, he still pays no heed to it, and does not dissociate any one of them from him.

Wherefore, lest such a hurtful company should continue, they are of necessity sent together into hell; and there the father in the presence of his children is shut up under guard, and his children are separated and sent away, each to his place of life." (C.L. 405,6)

From these numbers it can be seen that all human relations, not only natural family relations, are entirely different with the natural and with the spiritual man. When the Church passes from a natural to a spiritual state it is like a passing into the spiritual world where the relations appear as they really are; with this difference that as long as we are in this world, as to our natural bodies, there is the possibility of a change of state, and therefore a hope that the state may change and become better, and therefore one should always be prepared to give assistance, where assistance is looked for and where it can be given in an orderly way. Assistance to coming to a better state should however never be forced on another, and it should usually not be offered to another unless there is some indication that the other desires it.

To one who is in good alone the above quotation appears hard. When we speak of good or love alone, we do not mean that such a one does not know truths, he may know many truths; but the truths with him are not free, but are subject to his love, and have no independence. And when we speak of those who are in truth or faith alone we do not mean that such do not have loves and goods, but they are not genuine goods or loves, because they have no freedom or independence, but are subject, and are in enslavement to a hard, dry and cold intellectual.

As long as a man trusts to his inborn feelings, his spontaneous emotions, his natural affections, or to his hard and dry intellectual, he cannot become a spiritual man. The only thing which can make man spiritual is the marriage of the good and the true, and man can never come into this marriage from himself; nor can he desire this marriage until he acknowledges and perceives that all life outside of this marriage is ugly, barren or putrid. When we begin to acknowledge this we begin to truly look to the Lord from Whom this marriage comes with the prayer. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." All relation between the members of the Church is genuine only to the extent that this prayer rules in the midst.
