

Conf 5 - Priestly strength - Strong and Gentle

The masculine heart - strong exterior - resist the demons

Safe, free interior - have to keep clearing out the thieves and robbers who seek to steal and slaughter and destroy

Must be penetrable - wound of love is the drawbridge - fall in love

GENUINE LOVE REQUIRES INTERIOR FREEDOM (APATHEIA)

St John of Kronstadt

Our spiritual organization is such that vicious passions are contagious. For instance, malice—even when it is not yet expressed in words or by acts, but is still concealed in the heart, and reflected but slightly in the eyes and face—is already transmitted to the soul of the one against whom I bear it, and is also perceptible to others. If I am disturbed by any passion, my disturbance communicates itself to the heart of another, like a sort of overflow of an impure current from one spiritual container to another.

If you eradicate in yourself your passion against brother, you begin to eradicate the same passion in him as well; when you are pacified, he will also begin to become pacified. What a close relationship there is between souls! How true are the words of the apostle, “we are members one of another”; “we, being many, are one bread and one body”; “he has made of one blood all nations of men.” This is why the Lord’s commandment requires that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Story of TOR Sister transforming her interior and reconciling and transforming the other’s heart

Baars on Listening

“Your affirmation, your feeling firm and strong, your possessing yourself in joy, your feeling worthwhile, starts with and is dependent on another human being, who:

1) *is aware of, attentive, and present to* your unique goodness and worth, separate from and prior to any good and worthwhile thing you may do or can do, and
2) *is moved by, feels attracted to, finds delight in* your goodness and worth, but without desiring to possess you, or use you, or change you, and
3) permits his being moved by and attracted to you *to be revealed* simply and primarily by the psychomotor reactions—visible, sensible, physical changes—which are part of his ‘being moved.’ These changes constitute the tenderness and delight in his eyes, his gaze, his touch, his tone of voice, and choice of words. They cause you to *feel*, sense, see and hear that you are good and worthwhile—good for the other and good in and of yourself. You come to feel and know who and what you are.” (Conrad Baars, *Born Only Once*, pp. 22-23)

Image of Water

“The affirming process can be compared in a certain sense, to the effect water has on an object immersed in it. The water surrounds it perfectly and adjusts itself faithfully to the exact contours of the object without destroying it. It allows the object, if a living one, like fish, coral, or plant, to grow and develop without hindrance by adjusting its own weight in relation to it. The water cushions with its mass and density any shocks or blows it might receive and thus protects the object. The tiny baby in the water bag of the pregnant mother is an excellent example. Finally, water may hide from view any defects the object may possess.” (Baars, *Born Only Once*, p. 27)

NOT JUDGING (DOROTHEOS OF GAZA)

Why are we so ready to judge our neighbor? Why are we so concerned about the burden of others? We have plenty to be concerned about, each one has his own debt and his own sins. It is for God alone to judge, to justify or to condemn. He knows the state of each one of us and our capacities, our deviations, and our gifts, our constitution and our preparedness, and **it is for him to judge each of these things according to the knowledge that he alone has.**

Story of two girls; started in one place, ended in very different places

I remember once hearing the following story: a slave ship put in at a certain port where there lived a holy virgin who was in earnest about her spiritual life. When she learned about the arrival of the ship she was glad, for she wanted to buy a small serving maid for herself. She thought to herself, 'I will take her into my home and bring her up in my way of life so that she knows nothing of the evils of the world.' So she sent and enquired of the master of the ship and found that he had two small girls who he thought would suit her. Whereupon she gladly paid the price and took one of the children into her house. The ship's master went away. He had not gone very far when there met him the leader of a dancing troupe who saw the other small girl with him and wanted to buy her; the price was agreed and paid, and he took her away with him. Now take a look at God's mystery; see what his judgment was. Which of us could give any judgment about this case? The holy virgin took one of these little ones to bring her up in the fear of God, to instruct her in every good work, to teach her all that belongs to the monastic state and all the sweetness of holy commandments of God. The other unfortunate child was taken for the dancing troupe, to be trained in the works of the devil. What effect would teaching her this orgiastic dancing have, but the ruin of her soul? What can we have to say about this frightful judgment? Here were two little girls taken away from their parents by violence. Neither knew where they came from; one is found in the hands of God and the other falls into the hands of the devil. Is it possible to say that what God asks from the one he asks also from the other? Surely not! Suppose they both fell into fornication or some other deadly sin; is it possible that they both face the same judgment or that their fall is the same? How does it appear to the mind of God when one learns about the Judgment and about the Kingdom of God day and night, while the other unfortunate knows nothing of it, never hears anything good but only the contrary, everything shameful, everything diabolical? How can he allow them to be examined by the same standard?

Those who want to be saved scrutinize not the shortcomings of their neighbor but always their own and they set about eliminating them. Such was the man who saw his brother doing wrong and groaned, "**Woe is me; him today—me tomorrow!**"

- freedom affirms the **fullness** of truth, which includes my own sins
- Look how he repents of his sin
- Love covers a multitude of sin - love speaks no evil, hides the sins of others
- We do the devil's work for him
- not a matter of loving sin, but loving sinners

Giving a loving space for repentance

[The saints did not condemn sinners but] suffered with them, admonished them, comforted them, gave them remedies as sickly members, and did all they could to heal them. Take a fisherman: when he casts his hook into the sea and a large fish takes the bait, he perceives first that the fish struggles violently and is full of fight, so he does not try to pull it in immediately by main force for the line would break and the catch would be lost in the end. No! He plays out the line and, as he says, allows the fish to run freely, but when he feels the line slacken and the first struggles have calmed down, he takes up the slack line and begins, little by little, to draw him in.

Example of a monk committing fornication

What did the blessed Ammon do when those brothers, greatly disturbed, came to him and said, 'Come and see, Father. There is a young woman in brother X's cell!' [9] What tenderness he showed to the erring brother. What great love there was in that great soul. Knowing that the brother had hidden the woman in a large barrel, he went in, sat down on it, and told the others to search the whole place. And when they found nothing he said to them, 'May God forgive you!' And so dismissing them in disgrace, he called out to them that they should not readily believe anything against their neighbor. By his consideration for his brother he not only protected him after God but corrected him when the right moment came. For when they were alone he laid on him the hand with which he had thrown the others out, and said, 'Have a care for yourself, brother'. Immediately the other's conscience pricked him and he was stricken with remorse, so swiftly did the mercy and sympathy of the old man work upon his soul.

Image of God in the center and human beings around the outside

- drawing closer to God, we draw closer to our neighbor
- Turning away from God we turn away from our neighbor
- (my addition) going towards those on the opposite side of the circle, we draw closer to God
- (My addition) helping those close to us (next to us) to go towards those on the opposite side, we draw closer to God

INTERIOR FREEDOM TO LOVE MY ENEMIES

Bless My Enemies O Lord

Bp. Nikolai Velimirovich

Bp. Nikolai Velimirovich was a Serbian bishop in the last century who spoke out courageously against Nazism until he was arrested and taken to Dachau. He was liberated from the camp when the Americans came in 1945 and chose to go to England rather than back to Yugoslavia (Tito had taken control and was crushing Christianity). He spent time in S. Canaan, PA and died in 1956. He was canonized in the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Enemies have driven me into your embrace more than friends have.

Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from earth and have demolished all my aspirations in the world.

Enemies have made me a stranger in worldly realms and an extraneous inhabitant of the world. Just as a hunted animal finds safer shelter than an un hunted animal does, so have I, persecuted by enemies, found the safest sanctuary, having ensconced myself beneath your tabernacle, where neither friends nor enemies can slay my soul.

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

They, rather than I, have confessed my sins before the world.

They have punished me, whenever I have hesitated to punish myself.

They have tormented me, whenever I have tried to flee torments.

They have scolded me, whenever I have flattered myself.

They have spat upon me, whenever I have filled myself with arrogance.

Bless my enemies, O Lord, Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Whenever I have made myself wise, they have called me foolish.

Whenever I have made myself mighty, they have mocked me as though I were a dwarf.

Whenever I have wanted to lead people, they have shoved me into the background.

Whenever I have rushed to enrich myself, they have prevented me with an iron hand.

Whenever I thought that I would sleep peacefully, they have wakened me from sleep.

Whenever I have tried to build a home for a long and tranquil life, they have demolished it and driven me out.

Truly, enemies have cut me loose from the world and have stretched out my hands to the hem of your garment.

Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them.

Bless them and multiply them; multiply them and make them even more bitterly against me:

so that my fleeing to You may have no return;

so that all hope in men may be scattered like cobwebs;

so that absolute serenity may begin to reign in my soul;

so that my heart may become the grave of my two evil twins, arrogance and anger;

so that I might amass all my treasure in heaven;

ah, so that I may for once be freed from self-deception, which has entangled me in the dreadful web of illusory life.

Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies in the world except himself.

One hates his enemies only when he fails to realize that they are not enemies, but cruel friends.

It is truly difficult for me to say who has done me more good and who has done me more evil in the world: friends or enemies.

Therefore bless, O Lord, both my friends and enemies.

A slave curses enemies, for he does not understand. But a son blesses them, for he understands.

For a son knows that his enemies cannot touch his life.

Therefore he freely steps among them and prays to God for them.

From Prayers by the Lake by Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, published by the Serbian Orthodox Metropolitanate of New Gracanica, 1999. This article can be found on the Regeneration website.