

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

LOVING ONE ANOTHER (Part 3)

BEING ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD

November 5, 2009

Our relationship with each other has to do with our relationship with God. This is important to understand, because it is easy enough to know that we should do right by God, but we often do wrong to others. But as Jesus commanded, we are to love God and our neighbor, and the two go together. If we say we love God but we hate our brother, then we are liars.

In today's reading, Paul expounds on the reality of such interrelationship.

First, Paul emphasizes who we are and what our proper relationship to God is, as this is the starting point. "None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Rom 14:7-8). Jesus has purchased us on the cross by the shedding of his precious blood. We now belong to him.

Next, Paul connects this reality of belonging to God to our relationship with our brethren. "Why then do you judge your brother? Or you, why do you look down on your brother?" (Rom 14:10). If we belong to God, then we are to reflect His image and likeness, we are to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we are to live in the Spirit. As such, those who belong to God deserve respect and love. Thus we are to love others as Jesus has loved them. No matter how bad they might be, we are not to look down on them, because they too are made in the image and likeness of God, they too are loved by Him, they too were saved by Jesus on the cross.

In loving our brethren, we are not to judge them. Does this mean we can never make a judgment on the wrongness of an action? No. We do recognize sin and wrongdoing. We have the commandments to guide us in this. However, it means not judging their heart in the things they do. If they do wrong, we certainly can recognize that objective reality, but we do not impute motives. We condemn the sin but not the sinner. We hate the sin but love the sinner.

How about justice? We are to leave judgment to God. Only God truly knows what is in the hearts of everyone. And God indeed is a God of justice and righteousness. Sin will be punished, and virtue will be rewarded. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom 14:10c).

"So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God." (Rom 14:12). We stand before God responsible for our own actions, or for our inaction. In the end, God will hold us accountable for how we have loved.

* * *