

November 22, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Love and Hate

We often hear from popes and saints that love is stronger than hate. It was this lesson that a father recently taught his son in France only a few days after the terrorist attack of November 14th. The little boy was telling his father that they should move away because there were mean men with guns. The father pointed to all the flowers and candles that people were placing around a monument nearby in memory of the victims. The boy asked if the flowers and candles were going to protect them, and the father said yes, because all those candles and flowers were symbols of love. Love is stronger than hate.

St. Thomas Aquinas answered the question, “whether hatred is stronger than love?” long ago in his *Summa Theologiae* of the 13th century (1265 -1274). He presents three reasons why people may believe that hatred is stronger than love. The first: If it came down to a choice between avoiding pain or having pleasure, people would choose to avoid pain. The second: The weak is always overcome by the strong and love often turns to hate. The third: People and animals often refrain from pleasure for fear of the whip, therefore hatred is stronger than love.

St. Thomas Aquinas said that love is stronger than hate, because it is impossible for an effect (hate) to be greater than the cause (love). These are philosophical terms, but they are easy to understand if we think of God as the prime cause who is all good. Nothing that happens in the world can be greater than God and his love.

Question 29 in the *Summa* deals with the subject of Hate. His explanation is very interesting: “Hatred sometimes seems to be stronger than love for two reasons. First because hatred is more keenly felt than love ... and hatred that corresponds to a greater love moves us more than a lesser love.”

Reading all this makes me realize how people can be manipulated by hatred in their hearts for others, and what power it can play on our minds. The great gift of faith in Jesus Christ is love and the primary role it plays in our life.

We must try with the help of God’s grace to overcome any and all feelings of hatred that we may have in our hearts for anyone. Recall the passages of scripture that encourages us to do so: “Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness” (1 John 2:9) and “We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:19-20).

If it is a question of love or hate, choose love. That’s what a Christian does. Hate is the poison of the devil.