

Column101622

Companions on the Journey

October 16, 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

I came across this quote recently and it struck me as particularly prescient for our times especially with our election cycle entering into its final month. Read it closely a couple of times. I did.

“An unredeemed appetite for enemies — their humiliation and their destruction — is a primordial human addiction. Saint Augustine called it our *libido dominandi*; the will to power, our hunger to dominate. Hatred is poisonous. But it’s also, in a terrible and fatal way, exhilarating. The reason is simple. Hatred isn’t the opposite of love; it’s love’s deformed mirror-image, which is why it has such power.”

The Spanish word for friend is amigo; the Spanish word for enemy is Enemigo. Non-friend. Have you noticed that more and more people are identifying people they consider to be their enemies? Their non-friends? Especially, in the world of politics? I hate him. I hate her. Anybody who voted for him is a fascist or a socialist. We place all these names upon people and in that moment of very rash judgment we size them up and dismiss them. They are not worth our care, our mindfulness, our consideration. They are only worthy of our disdain, our dismissal, our condemnation. And where is the Way of Jesus in all of this?

There is a growing Either/Or mentality to be encountered in the world of politics, education, religion, even work. More and more we are pressured to hold certain beliefs, to act certain ways, to see things they way “we” see them or be banished, removed, cancelled, dismissed. While some are digging in their heels even more deeply, others are starting to seek another way. Even on social media. Again I recently came across this post from a nun in the seventeenth (1600’s) century.

“Lord, you know better than I myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every occasion. Release me from the craving to straighten out everybody’s affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody. Helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all; but you know, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet, for a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people; And give me, Lord, the grace to tell them so. Amen.

In the Peace of Christ,

Msgr. McHenry