MARCH 13, 2026 FATHER VIJAI AMIRTHARAJ

A rabbi asked his disciples, "Why do people shout and scream at each other when they are angry and upset?" A disciple said, "Because we lose our calm." "But why to shout when the other person is just next to you?" asked the rabbi. And the disciples gave many answers, but none satisfied the rabbi. And finally, he explained, "When two people are angry at each other, their hearts are distanced a lot, and to cover that distance, they must shout, so that they can hear each other. The angrier they are, the louder they will have to shout in order to hear each other."

And then, the rabbi asked, "What happens when two people fall in love? They don't shout at each other, but they talk softly. Why? Because their hearts are very close, the distance between them is very small." And the rabbi continued, "When they love each other even more, what happens? They do not speak; they only whisper. And then, they need not even whisper. They only look at each other and they communicate to each other."

I believe in the last statement. I have seen women look at their husbands when they don't behave properly in the morning, or speak more than they should. I don't think it's always a look of love, but the husbands always get the message.

Now, in today's Gospel, in response to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus gives not one, but two commandments: to love God with one's heart, mind, and soul, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. Recently, I came across a metaphor that is attributed to a 6th century monk and hermit by the name Dorotheus of Gaza. It goes like this: think of a wheel or a circle. In modern times, we can think of a bicycle wheel. Imagine the spokes of the wheel. As the spokes travel

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from the outside of the tire towards the hub in the centre of the wheel, they necessarily get closer to one another.

In this metaphor, the centre of the wheel is God, and the spokes are each of us on our own path to God. It doesn't matter at what point on the circumference you start, as one continues the journey to the centre, one must get closer and closer to other people on their own paths.

Now, in his teachings, and in his preachings, Jesus always emphasized on the love of God and on the love of neighbour, which are like the two sides of the same coin. And St. John, knowing this close connection, wrote in his first letter, "If anyone says, 'I love God', but does not love his brother or sister, he is a liar." A Catholic American journalist and the social activist Dorothy Day once wrote, "I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least."

Now, Jesus met many people while his ministry, and he always treated them with love, and he always called them to treat others with love.

Now, sisters and brothers, I often think about the choice I have each time I interact with someone, especially if I'm not in the greatest mood. I can choose to let my bad mood take over and come across as insensitive or contemptuous, or I can work to overcome it to be more thoughtful and humble. These are choices that all of us have.

Of course, the call to love our neighbours as ourselves is not always easy, we know that very well, and I have certainly not lived this out in all my interactions with others. Still, striving towards virtue and attempting to live more in line with the teachings of Jesus each successive day is a journey and an integral part of our Christian life.

And the holy season of Lent is an opportune time for each of us to accept our limitations, to accept our weaknesses, and to seek God's help

and grace to live each day more in line with the teachings of Jesus, namely, loving God and loving our neighbours. So, we pray for such grace today.