

the greatest gift of all **LOVE**

FRANCIS MACNUTT

Please enjoy this "legacy article" by our beloved Francis MacNutt. His calling was to restore the ministry of healing prayer to the Church, but more than that, he lived a legacy of love!

Every Christian knows about Jesus' great Command, but the great question is, "Why hasn't it happened?" — Ghandi

INTELLECTUAL UNDERSTANDING

We all know Jesus' answer to the scribe's question (*What is the greatest Commandment?*): "You must love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). The second part is like the first: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

The rabbis of Jesus' time already knew this from their study of the Scriptures. What is not so well-known—and certainly not lived—is that Jesus amazingly expanded this commandment by teaching a new version at the Last Supper: The New Command is "to love one another as

I have loved you" (Matthew 15:12).

This command goes counter to all our natural inclinations, because it means that God now wants us to love our enemies. The history of the last 2000 years shows that most Christians have not been able to do this. We have often simply ignored Jesus' teaching or have found clever ways of making exceptions to it. This is because the natural way of dealing with enemies is to kill them or dominate them.

No longer is it enough merely to love our family, our friends (our "neighbors"), or our national group. We now must love our enemies. We must have compassion on their suffering and not rejoice in their getting what they deserve. Yet our unredeemed humanity does not want to do this. It seems unfair, unjust—even immoral.



Even the people Jesus taught felt this way: the first attempt on Jesus' life came very early (Luke 4) when he pointed out in the synagogue that God chose to bless and heal Arabs rather than Israelites. This came immediately after his audience marveled at how well he spoke about liberation and healing in his commentary on Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:22). Even today, you can imagine how chilly a reception you would get if you talked about how God healed an Arab (Syrian) general of his leprosy when there were many Jewish lepers that God could have chosen. The other example he used was the feeding of an Arab widow in Zarephath

when many Jewish widows were suffering from a three-and-a-half-year famine in Israel (Luke 4:25). The congregation's response was to try to throw Jesus off a cliff (Luke 4:29–30).

First, we need to recognize in our own lives that Jesus really gives us a New Commandment—and then we need to repent of the ways we use to argue our way out of his command. In Jesus we find that God's intention is to unify the entire human race and bring us all into his Kingdom. He especially wants to bring in the outsiders: the disreputable, the poor, and the outcasts. Jesus was first sent to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and then his Kingdom was extended to the entire human race.

This is the main point of many of Jesus' parables, such as the Good Samaritan (Samaritans were considered heretics and, moreover, were a mixed race), the Prodigal Son (compared to the respectable Elder Son), and the Rich Man (who scorns the starving Lazarus at his gate). The most common criticism made about Jesus by religious people was that he consorted with "sinners," such as prostitutes and tax collectors. When the religious elite of his day quoted the Law to him, he responded that his "Father wanted mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7). He taught us to avoid seeking possessions, fame and power, the ordinary perks that come with advancing in society—everything in our lives that would set one group over or against another. His teachings were so counter to our natural inclinations that he said—even to his chosen disciples—that they were not yet ready to receive all his teachings, but that the Spirit would be sent to give them the further, deeper instruction that they needed.

WE DEMONIZE THE ENEMY

Historically, what we have always done to justify our hatred and willingness to kill has been to claim that the enemy group is not worthy of being loved.

We do this because the person or group is *evil*. Therefore, the most moral action is to eradicate the person or the group. We believe that the other group is part of an "axis of evil" (and you do not even talk to people like that). Over and over this happens. Heretics should be killed by the Inquisition; we need the Death Penalty to rid society of major criminals; the French Revolution rids France of its destructive upper class; communists get rid of capitalism by executing capitalists.

Another way out is simply to regard some people as *subhuman*, beings that have no rights. For 2,000 years, Christians justified slavery and, as a result, the enslaved race could be tortured or killed like animals. Consider how the Spaniards dealt with the Native Americans in Central and South America, how the English dealt with Native Americans in their colonies, and how Americans massacred them later. Oliver Cromwell claimed that the Irish soldiers they killed had tails on them; and so it goes. The groups who are our enemies are evil or subhuman and have no rights. Our prison system is another example. Its primary intent is to punish, and the saving and restoration of criminals is not a jail's major purpose. We retain the Death Penalty and some Christians do not sense that this goes counter to the primary purpose of a Christian prison system, which is to redeem and save whatever can be salvaged in a criminal's life. It seems much easier for us to see evil than to see good in people.

THE MYTH OF REDEMPTIVE VIOLENCE

Redemptive violence seems to be part of our national ethic—even among Christians, in spite of Jesus' non-violent teachings. The myth assumes that evil can be wiped out by wiping out violent people, provided your intentions are good. Many of our movies are based on this traditional, pre-Christian myth. For example, a typical Mel Gibson movie, like *Braveheart*, features a hero who is pushed to the brink by evil men, but then fights back

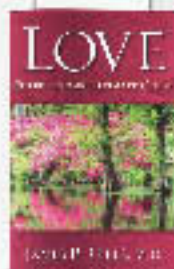
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Renew and Review Online May 2-5	SHP® Level 2 (on campus) Aug 24-26
SHP® Level 3 Online May 18-Jun 3	SHP® Level 3 Online Sep 7-23
SHP® Level 3 (on campus) Jun 1-3	SHP® Level 3 (on campus) Sep 21-23
Journey to Healing (on campus) Jun 15-17	Captivate Women's Conference Oct 5-7
Internship (on campus) Jun 13-17	Renew and Review Online Oct 24-27
SHP® Level 1 Online Jul 6-22	SHP® Level 4 Online Nov 2-18
SHP® Level 1 (on campus) Jul 20-22	SHP® Level 4 (on campus) Nov 16-18
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and kills them all, or dies trying. We all feel like applauding at the end.

In *Born to Fight*, which is a history of the Scotch-Irish people, the author points out with pride that his race (my race, too) never backs down from a fight. They were the pioneers in Kentucky who, unlike the Quakers, sought to fight with Native Americans. To them, mercy was seen as weakness. They were the gunslingers in the West (Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid) and, like General Patton, were often the heroes in our wars. In the face of evil enemies, they got out the posse and a rope. Many Christians praise these warlike attitudes. Yet, Jesus chose to be the victim—the Lamb of God—rather than the victorious warrior, the Lion of Judah.

THE GREATEST IS LOVE

Our first need is to know, *to realize*, what Jesus' teaching on love was.

Next, we need the Spirit to *live it*. We need the power of the Spirit to transform us so that we see people with God's own love and love them with His love—"the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). The traditional understanding of Pentecost and the gift of tongues is that the Spirit removes the curse of the tower of Babel and enables the human race to communicate and love each other once again. Without the Spirit, it does not happen (Romans 7).

We desperately need the fruits of the Spirit, the first being *LOVE*, or we will never be transformed and become like Jesus. ✠



FRANCIS MACNUTT was a co-founder of CHM, speaker, teacher, and author. As a theologian, he was instrumental in restoring the healing ministry to the Church, and has left a legacy of love that has changed millions of lives around the world.

DOES THIS

dream

BELONG TO YOU?

millions

receiving prayer

generations

receiving healing

thousands

receiving training

God placed a dream on the hearts of Francis and Judith, and it has become the dream of the whole CHM family. Our dream is to build a healing place where people can come to receive prayer and training, now and for generations to come.

Thanks to the support of so many who have come to realize God's purpose for CHM, we successfully raised enough to purchase land in Jacksonville, FL. This land is dedicated to our new healing center that will become a visible sign of God's love for His people, and a "city of refuge" for all those in need.

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