

Friendship fulfils the commandment of Jesus, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (*Jn* 15:12). The Christian morality of friendship, according to Fr. Servais Pinckaers, OP, is founded upon the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, of divine grace, which is the source of these gifts, and of happiness (beatitude), including the Gospel beatitudes, which is the end-term of the New Law.

Against violence, priority must be given to the formation of communities of Christian friends. In our earthly pilgrimage such communities give witness to solidarity first and foremost by celebrating Baptism and the Eucharist, by caring for the sick and dying, and by visiting the imprisoned. In civic life Christians are called to pursue the perfection of justice. They do this by extending networks of friends within politics and the economy.

Prayer and contemplation are also essential to the Christian response to violence. Our memories of the opening of the Holy Door during the Jubilee Year should be dusted off. It is the door of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is connected to the Pope’s Lenten confession of the sins of the Christian past and his request for pardon in the name of Christians.

Before violence, Christians must pray to be sealed with the Holy Spirit. Pope John Paul II teaches, “With the gift of his Spirit, Christ gives new content and meaning to the law of reciprocity, to our being entrusted to one another. The Spirit who builds up communion in love creates between us a new fraternity and solidarity, a true reflection of the mystery of mutual self-giving and receiving proper to the Most Holy Trinity. The Spirit becomes the new law which gives strength to believers and awakens in them a responsibility for sharing the gift of self and for accepting others, as sharing in the boundless love of Jesus Christ himself” (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 76). The Pope concluded, “It is not only a personal but a social concern to make unconditional respect for human life the foundation of a renewed society” (no. 77).

The eleventh of September 2001 is forcing people to rethink their moral values from top to bottom. War and death and violence are being integrated back into the spiritual universe. Our journey on earth is one of exile. “Let us go forth to [Jesus] outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come” (*Heb* 13:13-14).

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