

AN ENEMY? NOT AT ALL

*From: Stories, Parables and Fables of life of
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Intent of the Story:

- ✓ *God loves all - men and women- alike*
- ✓ *We have to love friends and ‘enemies’ alike*
- ✓ *Actually speaking there no estrangers in our world, they brothers ad sisters we have not yet come to know*
- ✓ *God has no enemies. Enemies and distinctions are of our making.*
- ✓ *God made us one, we made ourselves different*

The Story

In the bosom of a good and loving family in Spain, two brothers were born, James and John. Their Parents brought their sons up in the fear of God and in the practice of virtue. Once in college, however, the two brothers parted ways. John remained a responsible, religious-minded, hard-working young man. Eventually, he became a Doctor and the support and pride of his parents.

James, unfortunately, got mixed up in bad companies, went astray, dropped college and led a vicious life. Finally, he got in the company of and rowdies and criminals. For many years no one ever heard of him anymore.

During the Spanish Civil war in 1936, James was conscripted in the regular army and, like the other young men of his age; he was compelled to join the army and go to the battlefield

The opposing army - if you could call it an army at all – a medley of riff-raff crowds, international mercenaries and adventurers - backed by some foreign powers fought for three long years against the regular armed forces

One day, after a fierce fighting, when the battling armies retired to their positions for the night, one could hear the groans and cries of a wounded and dying man lying in between the opposing trenches. Pitifully he cried: “Help! Help! Help!.” In that predicament, no one would venture outside the trenches to help any fallen soldier, much less if the dying man happened to belong to the opposing army. To go out of the trenches to help a wounded man, would mean sure death.

The cries of that dying man, however, broke John’s heart. For a long time, he resisted the his impulse to jumping the trenches and going to help his dying enemy. At last, he could not hold himself any longer. In a fit of generosity, he sprang to his feet and said to himself: “I’ll help him whatever happens”.

John's companions shouted: "Don't go. It's sure death! Besides, why should you risk your life for an enemy? Let that dog die! Stay in the trenches! Spare your life! John had made up his mind. No one would stop him. Taking a water bottle and some bandages, he jumped outside the trench.

Under the cover of night, crawling and dragging himself, he managed to reach the dying enemy. He turned him over to give him a sip of water... Then, when he saw the face of the dying man, he was struck with astonishment, and cried out: "What? You? James? My brother?"

There was a long silence. Tears rolled down the cheeks of both brothers. John gave James some water to drink. He lied down beside him, hugged him, kissed him, spoke kind words to him and helped him to repent from his wasted life. Then, holding hands; he stayed on till James passed away.

On returning to the trenches, his companions and officers rebuked James severely: "You fool! Why did you risk your life for an enemy? Have you no sense?"

Peacefully and calmly, John retorted: **"An enemy? Not at all! You are mistaken. It wasn't an enemy! It was my brother James! And I never knew it!"**

(From a reportedly true story of the Spanish Civil War 1936 – 1939)

SOME POINTS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION:

1. Does God have enemies? Why? Then, why should we have enemies at all and hate anyone?
2. Comment on the last words of John: "An Enemy? Not at all! You are mistaken! He was my brother and I never knew it!"
3. Can you re-tell some similar incidents of your life when you discovered a friend, in some one you disliked or even you hated?
4. Who has made the hateful distinctions existing in our world between man and man? How did such distinction come to be?
5. How can some groups of people – because of ethnicity, caste, religion or culture, etc...are thought to be enemies when we do not even meet them at all?
6. How do such "prejudices and biases" pass on from one generation to the next? What are the fateful consequences of such prejudices?
7. Mention some common prejudices amongst us?
8. Quote some Gospel texts where Jesus teaches us to love indistinctly all men and women.
9. Are there some other lessons we can learn from the story
10. Explain the meaning of the following statements:
 - "Actually speaking Jesus never died for his 'enemies' but only for his 'friends'.
 - God never punishes his 'enemies', nay, He cannot do that!
 - It is we who punish ourselves for our wrong doings.

- In life, actually there are no strangers, but only brothers and sisters we never came to know.
- Loving is divine, liking is human
- God can only love us, He cannot either like or dislike/
- Though we may not be able to like our enemies, we can love them all the same.
- Liking is a feeling, love is a will! .

SOME IDEAS FOR AN INPUT AND COMMENT:

- Though we are not aware of it, all men and women are our brothers and sisters; both in the natural sense, as members of the human family, and even more, in the spiritual sense, as members of God's household.
- In a truer sense, all Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ. And in Christ, they are members of the Christian family, sharing the same faith, the same sacraments and the same vocation.
- Every human being has been made to the image of God. All of us are mirrors of God's love, beauty and power.
- God does not make distinctions between men and women, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, nationals and foreigners, masters and servants, good and bad, young and old, enemies and friends. Everyone enjoys the same privileges, the same favors and the same destiny
- All human beings exist and live and move because God loved them.. St, Augustine wrote: **We love others because they are. We are, because God loved us**
- **God loved us into existence.**
- All hateful and harmful distinctions between human beings are of human making! They are ugly, dangerous and fateful. They have to be done away with.
- By helping anyone in need, truly, we help a brother and a sister in need. By rejecting anyone, we not only reject a brother or a sister, but we reject God himself!

NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS ON FRATERNAL LOVE:

Mt.	12/37-39	The Greatest Commandment
Mt.	15/31-46	Parable of the Last Judgment
Jn	13/34-35	The New Commandment
Ja	2/1-7	Warning against prejudice.
Ja.	2/14-19	Faith in actions
Ja.	5/1-6	Warning against the Rich
1 Jn	2/7-14	The New Commandment
1 Jn	3/1-10	Children of God
1 Jn	3/11-18	Love one another
Jn	13/1-17	Washing of the feet
Jn	15/11-17	Love one another
Acts	2/43-47	Life among the Believers
Acts	4/32-35	All things in common

1 Co	13/1-13	Description of love
Ja	4/11-12	Warning against judging our brothers
Mt	5/21-24	Reconciliation with enemies
Mt.	5/18-42	Against revenge
Mt	5043-48	Love for enemies
Mt	18/21-35	Parable of the unforgiving servant