

Lesson 4: THE SCALE OF NEIGHBORS

Doctrine of Charity, chapter 4

Introductory Ideas for the Fourth Lesson

This chapter is a treatment of what used to be called the "degrees of the neighbor." This translator chooses the term the "scale" of neighbors. It expands on the idea of who the neighbor is, and that neighbor can mean a community of individuals or a country and, in fact, the whole human race. Here are a few introductory questions:

1. If the Lord creates all people, and he loves every person with the same love, are we to love all people equally? Why or why not?
2. What is that we are to love in another person?
3. Which is it more important for us to love: a person, a community, or a country?

Some Key Points in Chapter 4:

Charity 73 individuals are neighbors according to the quality of a person's good. This is not measured by kinship, or by friendship, but by the quality of good that each has. An example is given of a family in which half go to heaven, and half go to hell. When the brothers meet after death, they do not know each other, because they have such different qualities of good. How will we know our friends when we meet in the spiritual world?

Charity 78 a community is a composite person, just as the Grand Man of heaven is a composite of all the human beings who have been created. The good of the community determines whether it is a neighbor.

Charity 83 a person's country is a neighbor according to its spiritual, moral and spiritual good. Our own country is to be loved more than others. (This could be fertile ground for a discussion on international politics, *e.g.* the Iraq situation, or Israel. How should we support our country's actions when they involve others? The measure of our country's relations with other countries should be for the good of the countries that is at stake, and defending this alone.) How should we treat people from other cultures/countries?

Charity 87 the human race is the neighbor in the highest sense. What implication does this have for our day-to-day thinking?

Charity 89 is especially interesting, as it talks about loving others according to the lives that they lead. This is what binds society together, and is the fruit by which people's qualities are known.