



ONE'S OWN WORST ENEMY

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

The enemy of my enemy is my friend. In politics, there are no permanent friends, but only permanent interests. These statements go to show just how fleeting friendship and enmity can sometimes be. We may have an enemy now, but once that enemy becomes the enemy of another of our enemies, he immediately turns into one of our friends. Remarkable, isn't it?

Though those two statements directly contradict all I've ever been taught since my youth, the concept of loving your enemy is, without a doubt, a most bitter pill to swallow. Who among us will instantly turn from hatred to love when an enemy gets his comeuppance? Who is saintly enough to embrace someone from the opposite side despite knowing how that individual has made them suffer in many ways? To be loving and sympathetic to the plight of someone we barely know is hard enough; how much harder can it all be when that other person happens to be our sworn enemy?

But as worthy inhabitants of this borrowed world we reside in, the teaching "a tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye" needs to be put behind us, especially when there's so much suffering involved and our integrity is at stake. Enmity needs to be sacrificed at the stake of human fellowship, if only to show our own children that hatred brings no worthy returns. While it is so much easier to harbor ill feelings and negative emotions towards other people, what makes individuals more special is the way in which they can look beyond themselves-and their negative feelings-and find compassion and sincerity for others. Noble is the man who sees his mother's face in his enemy, or the one who sees a greatly loved person's countenance in a sworn enemy's face. We each deserve a place in the sun, and those that prosecute us and make us sorry we ever lived deserve nothing less, too.

It may not be all that easy, but think! Why continue keeping a heavy chest with every sight of that enemy? Why subject yourself to the same torture of an invisible hand clutching your heart tightly every time you hear your enemy's voice? Why even bother to keep the air unclean or impure with scoffs and words of derision for the one you hate? Is it ever worth it? Certainly, there are more ways to spend your time than merely being on the lookout for your enemy to fail or make a mistake. Why not just focus on yourself? Would you honestly want to be a friend of yourself? Do you consider yourself good enough friend material? Why not stop building walls and start building bridges instead? Yes, that will be the day!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the qualities of a friend? In contrast, what are the characteristics of someone you would consider an enemy?
2. Are you a good friend? How are you as an enemy?
3. Why is it easier to hate an enemy than to love them?
4. Would you "dance on the grave" of your greatest enemy? Why or why not?
5. Do you have enemies? What would make you come to love/like them?