

Judge Not
by Anthony De Mello

It is a sobering thought that the finest act of love you can perform is not an act of service but an act of contemplation, of seeing. When you service people you help, support, comfort, alleviate pain. When you see them in their inner beauty and goodness you transform and create.

Think of some of the people you like and are drawn to you. Now attempt to look at each of them as if you were seeing them for the first time, not allowing yourself to be influenced by your past knowledge or experience of them, whether good or bad. Look for things in them that you may have missed because of familiarity, for familiarity breeds staleness, blindness and boredom. You cannot love what you are not constantly discovering.

Having done this move on now to people you dislike. First observe what it is in them that you dislike, study their defects impartially and with detachment. That means you cannot use labels like proud, lazy, selfish, arrogant. The label is an act of mental laziness, for it is easy to stick a label onto someone. It is difficult and challenging to see this person in his/her uniqueness.

You must study those defects clinically, that means, you must first make sure of your objectivity. Consider the possibility that what you see as a defect in them may not be a defect at all but really something that your upbringing and conditioning have led you to dislike. If after this you still see a defect here, understand that the origin of the defect lies in childhood experiences, past conditionings, faulty thinking and perception; and above all in unawareness, not in malice. As you do this your attitude will change into love and forgiveness, for to study, to observe, to understand is to forgive.

Having made this study of defects, now search for the treasures buried in this person that your dislike prevented you from seeing before. And as you do this observe any change of attitude or feeling that comes over you, for your dislike had clouded the vision and prevented you from seeing.

You can now move on to each of the persons you live and work with, observing how each of them becomes transformed in your eyes when you look at them in this way. In seeing them thus it is an infinitely more loving gift that you offer them than any act of service. For in doing this you have transformed them, you have created them in your heart and, given a certain

amount of contact between you and them, they will be transformed in reality too.

Now make this same gift to yourself. If you have been able to do it for others that should be fairly easy. Follow the same procedure: No defect, no neurosis is judged or condemned. You have not judged others, you will be amazed now that you yourself are not being judged. Those defects are probed, studied, analyzed, for a better understanding that leads to love and forgiveness, and you will discover to your joy that you are being transformed by this strangely loving attitude that arises within you toward this thing you call yourself. An attitude that arises within you and moves out through you to every living creature.