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Those who say they love God, but do not love their brother and sister are liars

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“We love God because he loved us first” because love stems from him, the Holy Father explained to the faithful during his homily for Mass at Santa Marta on Friday, 10 January.

As he reflected on the day’s Reading from the First Letter of John the Apostle, he paused on John’s deliberate use of the word liar to describe someone who says he/she loves God but hates their brother and sister. The word liar, the Holy Father explained, is clearly defined in the Bible as “the devil’s way of being”, “the Great Liar” and as the New Testament tells us “the father of lies”. Hence those who hate their brothers “are on the other side” and “there are no concessions to this”.

Pope Francis then reflected on another aspect that can stop people from loving: the desire not to want to meddle in the lives of other people. However, the Holy Father pointed out, this too is not good because love “expresses itself by doing good”. Indeed, true love, he explained, “is expressed in everyday life, with its problems, its feelings of affection and dislike”. Faith offers us the opportunity to prevail over a mindset “that prevents us from loving”. Remember, the Pope said quoting Saint Albert Hurtado, “it is good not to do evil, but it is bad not to do good”, true love, he said “must lead you to do good... to dirty your hands in works of love”. It is not easy but through faith there is the possibility of prevailing over a mentality “that prevents us from loving”.

“May the Lord teach us these truths: the knowledge of having been loved first and the courage to love our brothers”, the Holy Father prayed at the end of his homily.