C.S. Lewis tells you how to see others

Most of us, in life like some people and you dislike others. You adore a few and really don't like a few. About some you can't gin up any feelings at all. Even the saintliest people often know one or two people who really get under their skin. You may feel you have no enemies, but these people you will have.

C.S. Lewis has an answer for this.

"The Weight of Glory"

I get his answer from the last quarter of the sermon I used in C. S. Lewis Tells You How to Observe Lent. (The other two articles in the series so far are C. S. Lewis Tells You What to Do With Your Life and C. S. Lewis Tells You What to Read.) The sermon, titled "The Weight of Glory," appears in the book with the same title and was preached in Oxford in 1941.

His answer, in short, is to remember exactly who all these people are, especially the ones you dislike. To put it another way, to see them not as they appear to us — as people whose personalities may clash with ours — but as they really are and as they will be.

"At present," he says, "we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door." We are not yet what God will make us, but neither is anyone else. That is sometimes very hard to remember about other people, say when you're hiding in the cheese section.

Lewis explains what he means by "glory" in several carefully argued pages, which I can't summarize here. I'd urge you to read the sermon, and for that matter the others in the book. Here I want to share what Lewis tells us at the end. This is what we need to see when we look at the person we don't like and the person for whom we have no feelings. We should see what love sees. Seeing what love sees, we might be able to love that person a bit more, or at least to act as we love him.

Lewis explains that you can't think too much about your neighbour's possible future glory. He has an immortal end, and it could be good or bad. "It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare."

Lewis explains briefly what this means for the way we relate to others. He then ends the sermon with a kind of summary of Jesus's parable of the sheep and the goats: "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat* — the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden."

That annoying person over there, he's Jesus to you — if only you see him as Jesus sees him.