

# *Loving Neighbours*



If you have never had to relate to a cow, you may be wondering what a cow has to do with 'loving neighbours.'

I once had a Jersey house cow, Merry, pictured above. During our time together, I believe I learnt from her something about developing a loving relationship with another—the type of relationship based on God's love for us. I shall describe how Merry and my relationship grew, using five brief events, and then applying them to loving human neighbours.

When Merry came to us, she had only known life as a cow in a herd that was milked each day by machine. The first morning when I came to milk her, Merry set out to defy me. She ran into the dam, stood in about 20cms. of water, and looked at me in a challenging manner.

Merry was not my first house cow, so her behavior did not unduly worry me. I quietly prepared her food in the shed, picked up a halter and walked out into the water in my gum boots. While chatting to Merry, I put on the halter and led her out of the dam and into the milking bail. Next morning she looked at me, but did not attempt to walk into the dam.

Weeks passed. I was in the middle of milking when, because my head was pressed into Merry's side, I could feel her moving. The head-lock was in an open position because she now stood quietly when being milked. Merry had pulled her head out, and when I looked up to see what was happening, she turned and licked my face with her rough tongue, as she would her calf. She then carefully put her head back through the head-lock and continued eating her grain. I could not be cross as I had obviously been raised to the status of No. 2 calf, a definite gain but not, of course, as important as the No. 1 calf to which she had given birth!

Months went by, and one day when I was milking, I did not feel very well. After I had finished I was decidedly dizzy. How, I wondered, was I going to walk up the hill carrying the bucket of milk and leading Merry to her day paddock. I told Merry that she would have to support me for the benefit of us both. She obliged, and with one of my arms across Merry's back and the other holding the bucket, we slowly climbed up the hill together.

Occasionally after lunch, when I liked to relax for a while, Merry would be sitting in her paddock chewing her cud. I began to go and sit on the grass near her, or lean against her back and read a book.

A few years later, I was inside our house when I heard Merry roaring loudly. I rushed outside to see what was wrong. She was standing at the fence in her paddock as near as she could to the house. I hurried towards her. When I was close she ran a few steps and then stopped, and looked back. She wanted me to follow. I climbed through the fence and together we ran to the other side of the paddock where she stood still and looked in a particular direction.

I also looked, and saw that a neighbour's cow had just calved and a large dog was attacking the calf. I hurried back towards the house and called out to another Sister to phone the owner of the dog. Next I armed myself with a stick, and tried to feel brave. I could not let Merry down! I climbed through the fence, brandished my stick and shouted at the dog, while hoping the cow involved would stay calm. Merry watched closely.



Eventually the dog was taken home and peace was restored. Together, Merry and I had shown love and care for our neighbours.

In John 13:34, Jesus declared that we are to love one another as he has loved us; and in Mark 12:29-31, that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbour.

We may have known someone we often met or worked with, who hurt us in the past and to whom we were not naturally attracted. After a while and with continual effort, our relationship improved. Then, unexpectedly, we had to ask for help from that person, and received it. We were grateful and our friendship and respect for each other grew. Gradually we became relaxed in the presence of our friend. We no longer felt a need to prove anything and could be ourselves, sharing our ideas and thoughts without fear.

One day we may have been challenged to not just care about our friend, but to work with her or him, and perhaps others, to help a stranger in need. We ended up showing love in a way we had never done before, and could not have done alone.

In this way of loving, we discover that God's love is to be given and received among *all* our neighbours. We, as members of the Church, the body of Christ, are daily called to reveal God's love to others, and so help to spread God's reign in our world.

*Sister Helen CSC  
(No.2) June 2021*