

DAY 3

heroic charity

Charity

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1822.htm');" 1822 Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

We must love as Christ loved (God and neighbor)

God - Jesus' love of the Father consisted in doing His will. "but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father."

"Rise, let us go hence."

charity keeps the *commandments* of God, "The love of God consists in this, that we keep His Commandments." (1Jn. 5:3) "Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."⁹⁹

Neighbor Jesus says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."⁹⁸

- Desiring and working for our neighbors' salvation.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1825.htm');" 1825 Christ died out of love for us, while we were still

"enemies."¹⁰⁰ The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*,

Hymn to Charity

The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: "charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."¹⁰²

1826 "If I . . . have not charity," says the Apostle, "I am nothing." Whatever my privilege, service, or even virtue, "if I . . . have not charity, I gain nothing."¹⁰³ Charity is superior to all the virtues. It is the first of the theological virtues: "So faith, hope, charity abide, these three. But *the greatest of these is charity*."¹⁰⁴

- the greatest because it is the only one that endures forever.

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The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which "binds everything together in perfect harmony";¹⁰⁵ it is the *form of the virtues*; it articulates and orders them among themselves; it is the source and the goal of their Christian practice. Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.

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The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us":¹⁰⁶

If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, . . . we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands . . . we are in the position of children. (St. Basil)

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charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest. (St. Augustine)

We consider heroic charity towards God under three aspects: 1) God as the immediate object of love 2) The way in which we love God 3) Zeal for God's honor

1) Heroic charity for God as the immediate object of our love is demonstrated by: a) profitable languor, i.e., disinterest in the things of earth b) Seeking God without ceasing c) Performing all actions out of love for God d) Enduring tribulations e) Seeing God as one's only true Good and pursue after Him f) Boldness, a love that casts out fear

g) a pure conscience before God

2) The way in which we love God: The observance of God's Commandments is a sign of common charity, while the same virtue possessed in an heroic degree is demonstrated by observing all that is good, even at the risk of one's own life.

3) Zeal for the honor of God is a sign of common charity, while heroic charity is a fearless, fervent zeal, which stops at nothing, even risking life and limb, in order to procure the glory of God.

By the enabling action of the Gifts of Understanding, Wisdom, Counsel and Fortitude, common charity towards God is elevated to heroic charity and is demonstrated by the flight and horror of sin, sincere effort to practice virtue, assiduous prayer, laboring for God and the Church, seeking to win souls for Christ, holding the Sacraments in high veneration especially the Eucharist, sincere and tender love for the Immaculate Virgin Mary and an ardent zeal which is reflected in all aspects of life.

Motives for loving our neighbor.

1) There is a natural love or affinity that even non-rational animals can be said to possess, i.e., a love for one's own kind, for the members of one's own family, or towards those who do good to us.

2) There is another love that can be called "rational" because it springs from a knowledge of the natural law, a knowledge that it is right to love one's neighbor.

3) The third kind of love of neighbor (*imperfecte gratuitus*) is

supernatural because it is elevated and elicited by an actual grace, but not in one who possesses sanctifying grace, and for this reason it is imperfect.

4) The fourth kind of love of neighbor (*perfecte gratuitus*) arises in the soul of one who possesses sanctifying grace and is also meritorious.

The extrinsic end of our love for neighbor must be God Himself, love of neighbor for God's sake. Therefore, our love of neighbor is relative and not absolute. Our love for neighbor must be well ordered, i.e., desire first and foremost their spiritual good then their material good.

- we can pray for material loss

Recall the words of our Lord, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." (*Jn 15:13*) There are various ways in which one may "lay down his life" for his neighbor and heroic virtue has various degrees. Nevertheless, the culmination of heroic charity for neighbor is, and always will be, the sacrifice of one's own life for the eternal salvation of one's neighbor according to the example of Christ. (e.g. St. Maximilian gave his life not so much to save physical life of [HYPERLINK "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franciszek_Gajowniczek"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franciszek_Gajowniczek) Franciszek Gajowniczek, as to save souls from despair in hunger bunker)

Signs of the common virtue of charity for one's neighbor are a love for him and his temporal and spiritual good as for oneself and one's own temporal and spiritual good. Heroic charity for neighbor has the same signs in addition to being prompt, easy and joyful when in action and being present at least in desire when lacking the opportunity to be in effect. Heroic virtue seeks to **serve** one's

neighbor in all his needs even at the cost of great sacrifice.

Benedict XIV states that common charity for one's neighbor is demonstrated by working hard for the benefit of one's neighbor, correcting those who are in error, bringing those who have gone astray back to the way of salvation, and by pardoning injuries. Heroic charity for one's neighbor is demonstrated by these very signs but done promptly, easily and joyfully; not once or twice, but frequently, especially if the work is arduous.