

The Will to Love

Spiritual Audit

Values Handbook

Part III: Love

Our Relationship with Others
The Call To Be Merciful
Illuminative and Unitive Stages
Charity
Almsgiving

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Love | Charity

Definition

In Catholic theology, both “love” and “charity” tend to be used for the same theological virtue. We will use Charity to name the virtue, and Love to name the value. Charity is, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the virtue by which we “lov[e] God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves, for the love of God.” CCC 1822. A theological virtue is initially infused by God into our souls, but becomes fully realized through habitual perfection. But this definition does not explain what it is *to love*. Bishop Robert Barron often says, “Love is an act of the will by which one seeks the good of another as other.” But this definition does not explain how we can love God. St. Francis De Sales has said that to love is to freely give yourself to another. Notably, love is not an emotion. **Putting these all together, we define the value of “love” as the quality of striving for perfection in *giving ourselves* both to God above all things for his own sake and to our neighbor out of love of God for their own good.**

Scripture

John 3:16 - “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.”

John 13:34: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

John 15:13: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Matthew 19:17: “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”... “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Matthew 25:40, 45: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me. . . . What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8: Love “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Reflection

The act of giving oneself as an unmerited and free gift to others, so that they may have eternal life, started with God himself. As the Gospel of John says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Jn 3:16. Then Jesus also told his disciples to do the same: “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” Jesus also said that this love goes beyond just following the commandments. As he said to the rich man, “If you wish *to be perfect*, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow

me.” (Mt. 19:17, emphasis added). This is perfection in being a gift to others – to give freely so that the other may have eternal life.

We make a gift of ourselves when we treat others with respect and dignity, show others kindness and hospitality, and are compassionate and generous. We are a gift when we serve others, seek understanding, are honest and truthful, and seek justice. And we are completely selfless when we forgive and enter into another’s suffering with love to be merciful. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, infuse the mind with the grace we need to be so selfless.

Most of the values related to love come directly from Catholic social teaching. They are all forms of loving God through the very act of loving others. What we do and fail to do for others, we do or fail to do for Jesus himself (Mt. 25:31-46). As Fr. Karl Rahner, S.J., has said, “when we love the other and do not block the dynamic of this love by being guilty of rerouting it back to ourselves, then the divine descent into the human flesh happens, so that God is where we are and is looking at us through the other person.” [Rahner p.82] When we reroute our love back to ourselves, when we give ourselves for reasons other than for God’s own sake or for our neighbor’s own good out of love of God, we are no longer a gift, but self-important and prideful.

How do we strive for perfection in being a gift to others out of love of God? How do we even start?

To be a perfect gift of oneself requires a love of God and a detachment from the things of this world. The love of God means developing the faith, humility, gratitude, obedience, and other values of surrender which are the focus of Workbook I. The detachment from the things of this world means detachment from pleasure, power, wealth, and honor, and avoiding suffering. Hence the purgative work of Workbook II. The more we love God, and have detached from the things of this world, the more free we are to give ourselves to others.

Also, just like prayer requires taking the time, learning to give ourselves to others requires deciding to take the time. One way to do this is by starting a practice of service to the poor or disadvantaged. Learn names. From these times of service, try to develop a sense of seeing God looking back at you through the people you serve. Take the time after the fact, in prayer, to reflect on who you met, what happened, how you felt, what you thought, what you did. Use these reflections to help you understand yourself better and continue to work on your relationship with God and detachment from this world.

What does perfection of this value look like? Love is what remains after faith and hope are fulfilled in heaven. We become in full relationship with God, sharing in his blessed life, and we become fully detached from things of this world. We become a complete gift to all others.

Knowledge

Definition

According to Catholic teaching, “Knowledge” is one of the *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1831) through which the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and perfects the virtue of faith. It “makes known to the soul the dependence of each creature on God.” [T, 624]. This knowledge enables us to perceive what is necessary for ourselves or for others to grow closer to God. We cultivate this gift by developing a practice of looking upon created things as reflections of God’s presence and for which their purpose – why they are present in our lives - is to lead us to God. This knowledge helps us detach from created things, including other people, which paradoxically enables us to be a greater gift – to give ourselves more freely. **So, we define the value related to “Knowledge” as the quality of developing a perspective of created things as reflections of God’s presence and for which their purpose is to lead us to God.**

Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.”

Psalms 19:2-3: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the works of his hands. Day unto day pours forth speech; night unto night whispers knowledge.”

Wisdom 13:1-5: “Foolish by nature were all who were in ignorance of God, and who from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing the one who is, and from studying the works did not discern the artisan; Instead either fire, or wind, or the swift air, or the circuit of the stars, or the mighty water, or the luminaries of heaven, the governors of the world, they considered gods. Now if out of joy in their beauty they thought them gods, let them know how far more excellent is the Lord than these; for the original source of beauty fashioned them. Or if they were struck by their might and energy, let them realize from these things how much more powerful is the one who made them. For from the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen.”

Philippians 3:7-9: “[W]hatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him ...”

Romans 1:20: “Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made.”

Reflection

On one hand, contemplating creation can show us the majesty and greatness of God and lead us to humility. Such humility by itself does not lead to detachment from our desire for created things in themselves, or toward greater unity with God. The gift of knowledge encourages us to take this observation of creation to another level, such as described by

Saint Bonaventure: “The entire universe may itself be a ladder for climbing into God.” [Into God, chapter 1, verse 2] We grow from a recognition that God is the creator, and we are not, to knowledge of the true purpose for creation - to lead us to a deeper relationship with God.

The various goods we own, wealth we have, or other possessions, are not here primarily for our enjoyment, but to lead us to God. How do they do that? First, they let us see God as the author of all things, and thus to see God in all things. As described in the book of Wisdom, in “the greatness and the beauty of created things their original author, by analogy, is seen.” We see God’s glory, divinity, and power. By detaching from goods and from the joy of having and using them and from the desire for them, we can more easily recognize them as not our own and give them to others.

Our talents and abilities also are intended to lead us to God. While work and enjoyments using our skills enable us to have things, survive, and live joyfully, the purpose of these talents and abilities is for them to be given to God and others – to co-create with God and cooperate with God in bringing about his kingdom.

Also, the pleasures of life, especially nourishment and learning for our own growth and sexual pleasure, similarly are not here *primarily* for our enjoyment, but to lead us to God. How do they do that? At first, pleasure lets us see God as desiring good for us and for all people. But when we detach from the pleasure in itself, we can more easily cooperate with God’s purpose of helping us both to be more fully present to others and to give new life to others.

We can cultivate this perspective in a number of ways, such as through developing habits of humility, generosity, simplicity, and detachment. We can start to notice the thoughts, emotions, and desires that we associate with the created things in our lives. At the beginning, such noticing may need to be an intentional practice, such as through a daily examen, applied after the fact. Gradually we develop an ability to notice such things in the present moment as they affect our actions. We can also continue to pray for an ever-deepening cooperation with this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Respect and Dignity

Definition

Many people say respect is *earned* – based on who you are, what you have done, or how you treated them, you might have earned their respect. Catholic social teaching directly contradicts this view. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1700), “The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God.” Because of the intrinsic, unconditional worth of every person because they are created and loved by God, we must acknowledge, honor, and reverence their inherent worth. **So, we define the value of “Respectfulness” as the quality of respecting and acknowledging the dignity in each person we encounter because they have been created in the image and likeness of God.**

Scripture

Genesis 1:27: “God created mankind in his image.”

Psalms 8:5–6: “What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god, crowned him with glory and honor.”

Proverbs 22:2: “Rich and poor have a common bond: the LORD is the maker of them all.”

John 8:3–11: “[They] brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say?’ ... He straightened up and said to them, ‘Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So, he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She replied, ‘No one, sir.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore.’”

Luke 10:29–30, 33–37: “He said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. ... A Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds, and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?’ He answered, ‘The one who treated him with mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’”

John 7:24: “Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly.”

Romans 12:10: “Love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor.”

Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves.”

James 2:1–4, 9: “[S]how no partiality as you adhere to the faith ... For if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and a poor person in shabby clothes also comes in, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here, please,” while you say to the poor one, “Stand there,” or “Sit at my feet,” have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil designs? ... [I]f you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

Reflection

The second chapter of the letter of James starts with a long description of the sin of partiality or favoritism. Summing this excerpt all up, we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is because each person is made in the image and likeness of God, and God loves each of us. If we show favoritism to anyone for any reason, such as what they wear, how they look, their social status, or the power or influence or wealth they have, then James tells us that we have become judges. It is a form of judging that is not just. When we treat someone especially well because of their external characteristics, that is a kind of favoritism. While favoritism relates to how we judge others, putting up appearances relates to how we manipulate others with the hope of provoking them into favoritism.

Judgment of others can arise when we treat others poorly because of their lack of status, power, wealth, good looks, or other characteristics. Consider the woman who was caught in adultery (Jn 8). They brought her in front of Jesus, “made her stand in the middle.” She was also being treated as a pawn in their efforts “to test Jesus,” not because they cared about her sinfulness either. It was to her accusers that Jesus famously said, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” But to the woman, Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you, but from now on, do not sin anymore.”

To develop this value of respectfulness, we can start to notice the thoughts, emotions, and reactions we have with all the people we encounter in our daily lives. We may need to start with an intentional practice, such as a daily examen, to review how we have treated those people we met. Gradually we develop an ability to notice such things in the present moment as they affect our actions. As we develop the ability to notice another’s dignity in the moment we encounter them, we are more likely to notice the presence of God with them and be more inclined to treat them with respect and dignity. How do we treat the rich and powerful, or the poor and weak? Those who have disabilities? The old? The young? Is our treatment of others because we recognized them as fellow creatures, who have been created in the image and likeness of God, or because of an end we desire, like recognition or favor?

Kindness and Hospitality

Definition

Being “kind” is often mistaken for just being nice or polite. Niceness and politeness are based on social expectations, conformity, and an expectation of reciprocity. They are essentially surface behaviors and conditional. Kindness, as a Christian value, is rooted in recognizing the dignity of another person and is not conditional. Kindness is expressed even when the other person is difficult, rude, or otherwise creating an uncomfortable situation. In some circumstances, kindness can require compassion, vulnerability, or even personal sacrifice. Kindness can be inconvenient. Hospitality is a form of kindness, but in the context of welcoming and sharing with others. It is more than just being nice and polite, but inviting others, especially the most vulnerable, to share generously in our world – in our own personal space. **So, we define “kindness” as the quality of choosing to relate to others, whoever they are and whatever the circumstances, with gentleness, compassion, and empathy out of love, and “hospitality” as the quality of welcoming and inviting others into our personal space with generosity and kindness.**

Scripture

Genesis 18:1-8: “The LORD appeared to Abraham ..., as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, **he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them**; and bowing to the ground, he said: 'Sir, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree. Now that you have come to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.' 'Very well,' they replied, 'do as you have said.' Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quick, three measures* of bran flour! Knead it and make bread.' He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then he got some curds and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them, **waiting on them under the tree while they ate.**”

1 Kings 17:10–15: “[Elijah] arose and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called out to her, “Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink.” **She left to get it**, and he called out after her, “Please bring along a crust of bread.” She said, “As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Afterwards you can prepare something for yourself and your son. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” **She left and did as Elijah had said.** She had enough to eat for a long time—he and she and her household.”

Matthew 8:2-3: “a leper approached, did [Jesus] homage, and said, “Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean.” **He stretched out his hand, touched him**, and said, “I will do it. Be made clean.” His leprosy was cleansed immediately.”

Luke 10:38-42: “Martha welcomed Jesus....Mary sat beside the Lord at his feet.”

Luke 19:1-10: “Zacchaeus received Jesus with joy.”

Hebrews 13:2: “Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.”

Reflection

One evening, three of us were sitting in our church hall, having some pizza, and discussing some videos on Catholic Social Teaching. A stranger walked into the hall – he said he was looking for some event at a church. He had the wrong church. It was obvious he was also troubled, but was aware enough that he had walked into a group that neither knew him nor expected him. We asked his name, introduced ourselves, and asked he wanted something to eat and drink. He sat and talked with us for the next hour, and told us a lot about himself.

I could not quote this at the time, but chapter 53 of the Rule of St. Benedict starts, “All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, who said, ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’” Hospitality begins with an open heart, a willingness to encounter others and accept them as they are, and a recognition of Christ in them. We say hello, take time to learn their names, and introduce them to others. We share something – our time, our space (in church or home), our food, or other goods. We offer a place at our table, offer a meal, or invite them to participate in whatever we are doing. We can be like the tax collector Zacchaeus who welcomed Jesus into his home. We can be like Martha or Mary – whether we prepare food or just sit and listen. We can be like Abraham, and run to greet the stranger. In rare cases, we may be asked to be like Zarephath and trust God in face of what is otherwise an extreme sacrifice.

Turning to kindness, the image that comes to mind is Jesus whenever he encounters someone that needs healing. In such an image of Jesus, we can see ourselves as someone he wishes to heal. A common thread through most of these healing stories is Jesus’ touch. To heal the leper, Jesus “**stretched out his hand, touched him**” which would have been utterly taboo in that age.

We can develop kindness and hospitality in ways similar to respectfulness. We can start by noticing the thoughts, emotions, and reactions we have with all the people we encounter in our daily lives. We may need to start with an intentional practice, such as a daily examen, to review how we have treated those people we met. To whom were we kind, unkind, or indifferent? What was happening to us internally during those encounters? What were our motivations? How and why did we set limits on our kindness and hospitality? Gradually we develop an ability to notice such things in the present moment as they affect our actions.

When fully perfected, through exercising kindness and hospitality we become a gift of ourselves to other people. They are welcomed into our space and treated with compassion and gentleness. When practiced as a community of believers, these values can drastically transform the community.

Compassion

Definition

Being compassionate typically means a combination of a feeling, such as pity, sorrow, or sympathy, and a desire to take some action, in response to another's suffering. Since all of us are suffering in some way and in need of healing, compassion is a critically important value to nurture in our relationships. To make this value fully Christian we should add that the motivation underlying compassion is love for God, the good of the other that is sought is their spiritual good, and that our action is a gift of ourselves. **So, we define "compassion" as a quality of responding to the suffering of others, out of love for God, with a gift of self that alleviates suffering and leads to spiritual healing.**

Scripture

Matthew 9:35 to 10:8: "Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so, ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. ... Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, '... Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons...'"

Matthew 14:13-21: "When he saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them."

Mark 10:46-52: "And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way."

Luke 23:34: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.'"

1 Peter 3:8: "All of you be of one mind, sympathetic, loving toward one another, compassionate..."

Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind to one another, compassionate..."

Reflection

The Gospels are filled with examples of Jesus' compassion. Matthew describes Jesus' heart being moved with pity for the crowds of people following him because they felt troubled and abandoned. So, what did he do? He sent out the apostles, giving them the authority to drive out unclean spirits and cure diseases and illnesses. A similar thing happened before feeding

the five thousand. Jesus saw a vast crowd following him and was moved with pity. So, what did he do? He cured their sick and he fed them.

Then there was Bartimaeus, a blind man who sat by a roadside, begging. He repeatedly cried out to Jesus, saying, “Son of David, have pity on me!” Jesus’ disciples actually told Bartimaeus to be quiet! But what did Jesus do? Jesus called Bartimaeus and healed him.

Even on the cross, he had pity for those *who crucified him*. Or maybe for more than just those – for all of us. “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” How well do we know what we do? Do we know how we hurt others or ourselves? Or, when we are hurt by someone else, how well do you think they know what they do? Do they know how they hurt others or themselves? Do we know how they are hurting? When we are hurt, can we be compassionate to those who hurt us, and see not what they do, but how they are hurting?

Our compassion is not limited to how we treat others. We also need to be compassionate *with ourselves*. Before going on to the prayers and questions for the day, take some time to reflect on the story of Bartimaeus, imagining yourself in his shoes. Take courage, get up! Jesus is calling you, asking, “What do you want me to do for you?”

We are called to be compassionate to others, as Jesus sent out the twelve. We are called not to be like Jesus’ followers who wanted to dismiss the crowds to find their own food, who told Bartimaeus to be silent, and who stood by and watched as Jesus died.

But how do we develop this value? We can develop compassion in ways similar to respectfulness and kindness. We can start by noticing the thoughts, emotions, and reactions we have with all the people we encounter in our daily lives. Consider starting an intentional practice, such as a daily examen, to review how we have treated people we met. Were we aware of whether or how they were suffering? What was happening to us internally during those encounters? How did we act and what were our motivations? Consider a practice of prayer. St. Pope John Paul II was said to regularly pray for each person that he met, especially for the grace to see them as God sees them. Gradually we develop an ability to notice such things in the present moment as they affect our actions.

When fully perfected, through exercising compassion we become a gift to others who are suffering.

Generosity

Definition

What differentiates generosity as a Christian value from merely giving is a combination of motivation and extent. While many are willing to give away money, time, talent, and attention, such giving can be motivated by a desire for recognition, feeling good about themselves, or merely tax advantages. Scripture admonishes us to give alms in secret. Also, giving can be merely from our surplus and transactional, and not a quality of behavior. Again, scripture encourages us to give unsparingly *of ourselves*. So, to capture the motivation of love of God and others, and the idea of giving of ourselves, **we define the value of “generosity” as the quality of sharing one’s self abundantly out of love of God and neighbor.**

Scripture

Matthew 6:3-4: "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you."

Matthew 6: 25-30: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’ All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.”

Luke 6:38: “Give and gifts will be given to you...for the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.”

Luke 17:33: “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it.”

Luke 21:1-4: “When he looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.””

2 Corinthians 9:6–7: “Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly...God loves a cheerful giver.”

Acts 20:35: “...remember the words of the Lord Jesus... ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Reflection

Pope Paul VI said this in his pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes* (para. 24): “Indeed, the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, “that all may be one. . . as we are one” (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that **man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.** (Luke 17:33)”

There are many ways we can give of ourselves: our resources, our time, our talents, our attention. One of the challenges everyone has is giving beyond just our surplus. It is natural to hold onto what we think we need or might need. Being able to give abundantly of ourselves, without anxiety about what we might need, will involve developing some other values first, especially those related to trust in God and detachment. It seems like Jesus would respond to all our objections to giving more with, “O you of little faith.” (Mt 6:30)

How much should we give? How far are we called to go? St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) said in her address to the United Nations, on October 26, 1985, “This is the joy of loving: **to give until it hurts.** It hurt Jesus to love us, for he died on the cross, to teach us how to love. And this is the way we too must love: until it hurts.”

Until it hurts.

I suspect that, if asked, “So what do I do when it starts to hurt?” she would have said, “Keep giving. And pray.”

But how do we cultivate this kind of generosity? Like all the other values related to Love, we can start by noticing the thoughts, emotions, and reactions we have when faced with opportunities to give. In a daily examen we could review whether opportunities to give of ourselves arose, and how we responded to them. What was asked from us? What emotions and thoughts arose about the people asking, their purpose, and our willingness to share? What did we do and why? Consider a practice of praying for growth in faith and detachment, to enable us to trust God and let go of the resources we have.

When fully perfected in union with God, generosity will be just one way of characterizing our perfected love – the total gift of ourselves to God and neighbor.

Service

Definition

Recently in the culture of the United States, community service is promoted, and is practically an expectation, in educational and corporate environments. Rightfully, because service promotes social good and community improvement. However, sometimes such service is done from a distance, without engagement with people who are receiving the benefits of the effort. Christian service is similar to hospitality in the sense of meeting someone in a personal space and spending time with them. But, instead of being hospitable when we invite someone into our world, when we serve others, we ask if we can join them in their world. Sometimes, but not always, service involves helping someone less fortunate than we are or someone who is suffering, in which case it is a kind of generosity. But we can serve anyone regardless of their station in life, from kings, queens, and presidents to the poor and the homeless. Performing works of service as a Christian value also are done in imitation of Christ, out of love of God, and out of love of neighbor seeing Christ in them. Service also is not performed to seek any reward or favor or to satisfy an obligation. So, **we define the value of “Service” as the quality of accepting an invitation to enter another’s personal space with humility to share one’s time and efforts abundantly with them, in imitation of Christ and out of love of God.**

Scripture

Luke 1:38: “Mary said, ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’”

Ruth 1:16-17: “But Ruth said, “Do not press me to go back and abandon you! Wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die I will die, and there be buried.”

John 13:2-17: “So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. ... Jesus said to him, “Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean ... So when he had washed their feet [and] put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me ‘teacher’ and ‘master,’ and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.”

Luke 7:36-46: “A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who and

what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. ... Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment.””

1 Peter 4:10–11: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

1 Samuel 3:10: “the LORD came and stood there, calling out as before: Samuel, Samuel! Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’”

Reflection

Earlier, in the topic of “Love,” my favorite quote from Fr. Rahner relating to service was presented: “God is where we are and is looking at us through the other person.” To see God looking back at us, *we have to be with someone*. And to respect their dignity, *they have to invite us in*. We might offer or ask first, but we cannot insist.

Although the whole human race was suffering in sin, God did not impose his salvation on us. Throughout salvation history he called out to each person – Abraham, Moses, Mary, made a promise to them, but it was up to them to accept. God sent his only Son, Jesus, but asked Mary, as our representative, whether he could enter into our space to save us. It is Christ-like to ask first.

But how do we cultivate a practice and mindset of service? Just start. Be intentional about serving your neighbors in need in your community and engaging in spiritual reflection about that service. Like all the other values related to Love, we can start by noticing the thoughts, emotions, and reactions that arise when we encounter others. What was asked from us? What emotions and thoughts arose about the people asking, their purpose, and our willingness to share? What did we do and why? After those encounters take the time to reflect on how you saw Jesus looking back at you through their eyes. Combining service with spiritual reflection is transforming both personally and for the community.

Service within the community also heals. When we bring God's Mercy into another person's suffering, we will bring healing. This healing arises not only by addressing physical needs, but also by bringing love, dignity, respect, caring, and understanding to our neighbors.

By working and praying together while serving the suffering in our community, we are responding to call to be instruments of God's mercy to serve our neighbors in love. In that call, in our response, in entering into that suffering, and in our neighbors, we encounter Jesus. The more we encounter God in Mercy, we learn to trust in His Mercy and deepen our faith in Jesus Christ. By being merciful in response to suffering, we can learn about how God desires us to "share in his own blessed life" (the very first sentence of the Catechism of the Catholic Church).

Understanding

Definition

According to Catholic teaching, “Understanding” is one of the *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1831) through which the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind with insights beyond just created things and into revealed truths of the faith. Through this gift, we are confirmed in our beliefs. [T, 628] One kind of experience through which we grow in understanding is by learning who God is not. We cultivate this gift by humbly asking for it in a prayer that combines an act of faith with contemplation and study about the truths of the faith, not by mere intellectual inquiry. St. John of the Cross also emphasized that the objective of such understanding is seeking knowledge for its own sake, which he called “spiritual lust,” but instead to seek union with God and share in his life. Thus, this gift enables us to give ourselves more completely. **So, we define the value related to “Understanding” as the quality of contemplating and studying the truths of the faith in the context of prayer to cultivate receiving the gift of understanding to strengthen our faith and to giving ourselves more abundantly to God and neighbor.**

Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.”

Psalms 119:33-36: “LORD, teach me the way of your statutes; I shall keep them with care. Give me understanding to keep your law, to observe it with all my heart. Lead me in the path of your commandments, for that is my delight. Direct my heart toward your testimonies and away from gain.”

Luke 2:19: “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”

Luke 24:13-17, 27, 30-32: “Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. ... Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. ... And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?””

Matthew 11:25: Jesus said, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.”

Matthew 16:16-17: “Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood* has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.””

2 Timothy 2:7: “Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

Reflection

One of the most insightful (well, to me) quotes I found in the writings of Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross) is her statement: “We draw near to God by denying what He is not.” It is important to remember, as addressed in our Handbook, that God is beyond human understanding. We cannot fully understand God, and our reason and intellect alone are insufficient to try to understand God. That is why understanding is a gift and needs to be sought in prayer, and with child-like faith. We start with a desire for truth. When we receive understanding, God is sharing in his own life - truth. Frank Sheed said, “the joy and excitement of theological knowledge is like the joy and excitement of any other love – it cannot be explained to one who has not experienced it; it need not be explained to one who has” [Sheed, p.12]

We can cultivate this value related to Understanding in a number of ways. First is through prayer. Psalm 119 is a great example. We also have Mary as a model, as we can reflect on our own, or we can be like the disciples on the road to Emmaus and converse and debate with others, and invite Jesus to come along with us.

We also can start to notice our thoughts, especially our doubts and questions about things we do not understand about the faith. Pray specifically about those doubts, asking the Holy Spirit to give you understanding. We can also continue to pray generally for an ever-deepening cooperation with this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, this gift of understanding is fulfilled in its purpose when we share God’s blessed life in heaven, and it enables us to give ourselves fully in love to God and our neighbor.

Honesty | Truthfulness

Definition

It can be simplistic to say that one must always speak the truth. While there is only one truth, God himself, we cannot claim to fully know the truth. Our understanding is often subjective, incomplete, or imperfect. On the other hand, it is substantially easier to know what is *not* true. Sometimes honesty and truthfulness are misunderstood as an obligation to reveal the truth, or an entitlement to information. How we speak and act should not reveal things that we are obliged not to reveal, or that are not our prerogative to reveal. Both charity and prudence guide what should be revealed or not. (CCC 2488-2492) Being honest or truthful is not only limited to what we say, but also involves our actions, and what we do not say or do. It also includes our motivations. Importantly, if we are not truthful and honest in who we are, when we give ourselves to others, what do they receive? **So, we define the value of “Truthfulness” as the quality of aligning our words, actions, and motivations with objective truth as revealed by God, as moderated by charity and prudence, to provide a gift of our true selves to God and neighbor.**

Scripture

Exodus 20:16: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

Proverbs 14:25: “The truthful witness saves lives, but whoever utters lies is a betrayer.”

Proverbs 25:9-10: “But the secrets of others do not disclose; Lest, hearing it, they reproach you, and your ill repute never ceases.”

Matthew 5:37: “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.”

John 8:31-32: “Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, ‘If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

John 8:43-44: “Why do you not understand what I am saying? Because you cannot bear to hear my word. You belong to your father the devil and you willingly carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”

John 14:6: Jesus said “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 16:13: “when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming.”

John 17:17: “Consecrate them in the truth. Your word is truth.”

John 18:37-38: “So Pilate said to him, ‘Then you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ Pilate said to him, “What is truth?””

Reflection

When we first prepared the predecessor work to the Will to Love Spiritual Audit, called the 40 Days to Mercy examination of conscience, its focus was on identifying sins. Of course, one topic was “Lying.” We did not have a topic for “Honesty” or “Truthfulness.” Hopefully, this discussion will highlight the benefits of a positively-defined value, since Truthfulness or Honesty, as defined as Christian values, are drastically different from not lying. How we modify our behavior towards truthfulness and honesty is quite different from turning away from lying.

It seems easy to say that we should just tell the truth, until we ask the same question that Pilate did when he questioned Jesus: “What is truth?” Perhaps the better question is “Who is Truth?” – to which the answer is Jesus.

St. Augustine, in his Confessions (book X, Chaps. 23-24) said, “Wheresoever I found truth, there I found God, truth itself, and since I first learned the truth I have not forgotten it.” He also asked an interesting question, “Why is it then that truth begets hatred?” He answered, “They hate it as much as it reproves them because they do not wish to be deceived but wish to deceive. They love it when it shows itself to them, and they hate it when it shows them to themselves.”

I have spent 35 years working in the field of law. Some might joke that I should be qualified to talk about lying. In law, we start with evidence, such as eyewitness testimony, physical things, results from scientific tests, electronic and paper documents, and evaluate how reliable and complete it is. We deduce or infer certain facts from reliable evidence. Rules, logic, and reason are applied to these facts, which lead us to conclusions about what is true, and what is not. Often, there is some gray area, as the same evidence or facts can be consistent with multiple conclusions, or unable to necessarily support a conclusion. In some cases, we do not have a ‘Yes’ or a ‘No’ and should have an ‘I do not know’ that means ‘I do not *know*.’

I learned from this way of thinking that whenever someone is “lying,” it is often more important not to call out the lying or to figure out the truth, but to understand why they are lying. We lie to manipulate or influence others to decide or act in a manner that helps us. We lie to protect ourselves. We lie to get power, pleasure, fame, or fortune.

Even without speaking, people can be dishonest. When people fail to reveal their authentic selves, like those in the Gospel who pretended to be righteous to trap Jesus, that is dishonesty, especially when they know they are not being authentic. We hate being lied to in this way because we want to know the person with whom we are dealing. We also hate being told the truth when it reveals our true selves.

When we lie or we are lied to, those lies hurt us and hurt our relationships. It is a well-known principle in game theory, and proven through multiple experimental studies, that people will cooperate to their mutual benefit so long as there is trust. Lying breaks trust.

And there is one kind of lie which is particularly harmful. The most hurtful lies, the most horrible lies, are often the lies we tell ourselves. Lies like this: “I’m not good enough.” “No

one, not even God, loves me, or should love me, or wants me, or cares about me.” “I don't deserve or am not worthy of being loved.” “I deserve to be all alone or poor, or weak.” “I deserve to feel unwanted or unloved.” “There's nothing I can do.” “My life isn't worth living.” Such horrible lies leave us bound up like prisoners. Jesus said the truth would set us free. And here is one truth that might help free us from those lies we tell ourselves: St. Paul said, “The God of peace himself will make you perfect and holy and will heal you entirely body and soul. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”

If we examine not just how we treat others, but also how we treat ourselves, especially the lies that we tell ourselves, we can renounce those lies and be healed of the injury they inflict on us.

So how do we go about cultivating these values of truthfulness and honesty? We can begin with a practice of noticing our thoughts, our emotions and feelings, memories we have, and our physical sensations. This can be done intentionally through a form of examen. In moments of interactions with others, we may be able to sense what we are feeling and thinking when we are inclined not to be truthful. What is our motivation? What are our physical and emotional reactions? What lies are we telling ourselves? After we start to notice and name these things, perhaps after the fact, we become better at noticing them in the moment and then being more intentional about how we act. Because the lies we tell ourselves are also often deeply rooted in our own personal traumas, there may be significant discomfort in facing those thoughts. In some cases, professional counseling may help.

Justice and Authority

Definition

“Justice” is often equated with fairness, equity, or merely following the law. According to the Catechism of the Catholic church, justice is a moral virtue. (CCC 1807) It means having a constant and firm will to give our due to God, and to give to our neighbor what is rightfully owed to our neighbor. The Catechism addresses justice in the context of the seventh commandment, thou shalt not steal (See CCC 2401-2463). With this virtue, we tend to respect the rights of others and have harmonious relationships with others. Justice arises in our everyday lives, with our work (whether we are an employer or an employee), the commitments we make to each other, and simply paying taxes. Exercise of this virtue is especially important for those with positions of authority, but also relates to actions of those under authority. **So we define the value related to justice as “being just” which is the quality of deciding, with reliance on prayer and counsel, to give our due to God, and to give to our neighbors what they are rightfully owed, out of love for God.**

Scripture

Genesis 1:26-30: “Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. ... God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth. God also said: See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food. And so it happened.”

Genesis 3:17-19: “In toil you shall eat its yield all the days of your life. ... By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread.”

Leviticus 19:13-15: “You shall not exploit your neighbor. You shall not commit robbery. You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your laborer. You shall not insult the deaf, or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am the LORD. You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your neighbor justly.”

Isaiah 30:21: “[Y]our ears shall hear a word behind you: ‘This is the way; walk in it,’ when you would turn to the right or the left.”

Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; In all your ways be mindful of him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Psalms 32:8: “I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk, give you counsel with my eye upon you.”

Luke 20:22-26: “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”

Matthew 16:27: “For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.”

Romans 13:1: “Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God.”

Reflection

For those who were born and raised in a time and place that emphasizes personal freedom and independence, and assumes that private property is the norm, some parts of Catholic social teaching may come as a surprise. As explained in the catechism (CCC 2401-2407), because everything we have is a gift from God (see Genesis 1), everything is “entrusted ... to the common stewardship of mankind”. This is not socialism or communism, since what we need to live comes from our own “toil” and “sweat of the brow,” yet whatever we have is entrusted to us as a steward.

This writing is not intended to be an exposition of Catholic teaching on justice, but instead on whether and how we can cultivate it as a value, towards which we exercise our will. And, how do we do that in the context of the theological virtue of love?

Looking back at the framework explained in the Handbook to this Spiritual Audit, the kind of decisions that require us to be just are fraught with the same problem Adam and Eve faced before the fall – the apparent good. We cannot know fully what is truly just, although we will know what appears to be just, and we probably know what is not just.

But we make better decisions through prayer, counsel, and study. Scripture admonishes us to not rely on our own intelligence, and to seek guidance. For hard decisions, it also makes sense, it is prudent, to consult with others and not rely on ourselves. Finally, there is no shortage of books on Catholic morality. Developing strengths in our values of humility and detachment also help us not to be swayed by our pride or attachments to worldly things like wealth, power, pleasure, or honor, and help us better discern what is just.

To grow in this value of “being just,” it will also help to take time to notice how we handle situations requiring us to act with the virtue of justice. Paying attention to our thoughts, we can identify those thoughts which affect our decisions, which likely will include responses to how we were previously treated unfairly. Paying attention to our emotions and senses, we are likely to identify situations which we find challenging or unjust, as injustice tends to provoke feelings of anger.

We are told by Scripture, that, as a matter of justice, in its fulfillment in heaven, each is repaid according to his conduct (Mt 16:25). I think this Scripture needs to be understood in the context of the law of the gift. Just two verses prior, Jesus said, “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Mt 16:23). The more humility we have and detach from things of this world, the more we will be able to give of ourselves out of justice.

Wisdom

Definition

Wisdom is commonly thought of as the collection of human experience, knowledge, and reasoning. But, according to Catholic teaching, “Wisdom” is one of the *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1831) through which the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and the will to perfect the virtue of Charity, and in turn all other virtues. It is, in essence, God’s knowledge, not human knowledge. Through this gift we are enabled to discern divine things, their ultimate principles and ends (that all things come from and return to God), and grow in desire for them. See [T., pp. 629-634]. This gift, in its fulfillment, enables us to fully comprehend that God is love. We cultivate this gift by longing for it, begging for it, and pursuing it, with prayer grounded in faith. **So, we define the value related to “Wisdom” as the quality of disposing ourselves to receive the gift of wisdom through prayer, grounded in faith, so that we may see all from God’s perspective, know love, and give ourselves more abundantly to God and neighbor.**

Scripture

Isaiah 11:2-3: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.”

1 John 4:7-8: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.”

James 1:5: “[I]f any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will be given it. But he should ask in faith, not doubting...”

1 Kings 3:5-12: “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said: Whatever you ask I shall give you. Solomon answered, ‘...I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act— I, your servant, among the people you have chosen, a people so vast that it cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant, therefore, a listening heart to judge your people and to distinguish between good and evil. For who is able to give judgment for this vast people of yours?’ The Lord was pleased by Solomon’s request. So God said to him: Because you asked for this—you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—but you asked for discernment to know what is right— I now do as you request. I give you a heart so wise and discerning that there has never been anyone like you until now, nor after you will there be anyone to equal you.”

Wisdom 9:4-11: “Give me Wisdom, the consort at your throne, and do not reject me from among your children ... Now with you is Wisdom, who knows your works and was present when you made the world; Who understands what is pleasing in your eyes and what is conformable with your commands. Send her forth from your holy heavens and from your glorious throne dispatch her that she may be with me and work with me, that I may know what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and will guide me prudently in my affairs and safeguard me by her glory.”

Wisdom 7:7: “Therefore I prayed, and prudence was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.”

Psalm 34:9: “Taste and see that the LORD is good.”

Reflection

Wisdom is the gift that we receive that enables us to “taste and see” that the Lord is good. We come to know what love is, not just in an intellectual way but in an experiential and spiritual way, like tasting and seeing, but in spirit and truth from God’s perspective.

As scripture notes, we have to *ask for* this wisdom, and ask for it with child-like faith. We start with a desire for knowing what it means for God to be love. There seems to be a bit of a conundrum since John suggests we need to love others in order to know what it is to love God. But I think when we ask for Wisdom, that gift enables us to see others as God does, and then in turn to love others as God does, and through that experience we know what God’s love is like.

The practices in these workbooks are already a kind of prayer for wisdom, as we have encouraged you to ask God to see and love yourself as he sees and loves you. The practices related to growing in humility help us grow in faith, which, paradoxically, removes doubt and makes our faith more child-like. By growing in faith we are more disposed to receive the gift of wisdom.

We also can pay attention to our thoughts, emotions, and feelings, associated with our interactions with others. In what way are we being made aware of how God sees and loves them? How are we reacting to that? In what way are we getting to know God or desiring to know more? We can also continue to pray generally for an ever-deepening cooperation with this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ultimately, like the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, this gift of wisdom is fulfilled in its purpose when we share God’s blessed life in heaven, where it enables us to give ourselves fully in love to God and our neighbor.

Selflessness

Definition

In contrast to the next three values of forgiveness, repentance, and mercy, self-sacrifice is limited to circumstances where, in the moment, we set aside our own needs and good to provide for another. This sacrifice could be as extreme as giving our lives. The motivation for this selflessness is to imitate Christ, not for recognition, duty, or other gain. **So, we define the value of “selflessness” as the quality of placing the needs and good of others above one’s own, in imitation of Christ, out of love of God and neighbor.**

Scripture

1 Kings 17:8–16: "Elijah said to her, 'Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink.'... He called out to her, 'Please bring along a bit of bread.' She answered, 'As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug... when we have eaten it, we shall die.' Elijah said, 'Do not be afraid...make me a little cake and bring it to me... For the LORD, the God of Israel, says, "The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry.'""

Matthew 20:16: “Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Luke 22:26–27: “Let the greatest among you be as the youngest, and the leader as the servant... I am among you as the one who serves.”

Philippians 2:3–4: "Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves."

Reflection

Other than in the relationship between a parent and a child, selflessness is not natural – in the sense that it serves no natural purpose of self-preservation. This is true especially between strangers and in the extreme of self-sacrifice. One needs to be led to this kind of selflessness by actual grace. It is difficult to be truly selfless in the absence of humility and detachment from the things of this world, even if just in the moment. Because such selflessness originates from grace, desire to be selfless, and prayer, both for the desire and ability to be selfless, are required.

It is important NOT to try to develop the value of selflessness too soon in the spiritual life. Selflessness that is not based in love of God, as a willing gift of ourselves, can result in sacrificing needs out of fear of rejection, a desire for approval or to please, or an unhealthy sense of responsibility. This kind of sacrifice can lead to resentment, low self-worth, or loss of personal identity.

Because of the challenges that can arise with working toward selflessness, the ACT techniques become particularly important. Of particular importance is paying attention to the thoughts which motivate apparently selfless actions. Noticing such thoughts in the moment may be difficult. Also, any unhealthy reasons for selfless actions might be due to issues which may warrant exploration in professional counseling. Other values that are important to focus on are love, humility, and strength.

Forgiveness | Reconciliation

Definition

In the final sequence of topics, we address forgiveness, repentance, and mercy. This order is because Scripture tells us to forgive others first before coming for forgiveness, and that forgiveness and repentance enable us to be merciful.

What does it really mean to forgive? Some English dictionaries have defined it as “to cease to feel resentment” (Merriam-Webster), or “to stop ... being angry,” “to stop blaming,” or “not punish” someone for something they have done. But the models of forgiveness in Scripture, and the nature of forgiveness to which we are called, are not so simple. Forgiveness is not only about *our* feelings or *our* right to action (merely “not punishing”). Considering our definition of love, how is forgiveness an act of love as a gift of self for another’s benefit? As explained in the reflection below, we give of ourselves when we intercede before God for the forgiveness of the accused. **So, we define the value of “Forgiveness” as the quality of interceding before God that another’s sin not be held against them, in imitation of Christ, and out of love of God and neighbor.**

Scripture

Genesis 3:5, 12-13: “God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.’ ... The man replied, ‘The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, so I ate it.’ ... The woman answered, ‘The snake tricked me, so I ate it.’”

Zechariah 3:1–4: “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, while the adversary stood at his right side to accuse him. And the angel of the LORD said to the adversary, “May the LORD rebuke you, O adversary; may the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clad in filthy garments. Then the angel said to those standing before him, “Remove his filthy garments.” And to him he said, “Look, I have taken your guilt from you, and I am clothing you in stately robes.”

Matthew 5:23–26: “But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raqa,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

Matthew 7:1-5 – “The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.”

Matthew 18:21-35: “Then Peter approaching asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to

a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. ... His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.'"

Luke 6:37: "Stop judging and you will not be judged... Forgive and you will be forgiven."

Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Acts 7:54-60 – "He ...cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"

Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ."

Romans 12:9-21 – "Do not repay anyone evil for evil."

James 4:5-12 – "There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save or to destroy. Who then are you to judge your neighbor?"

Reflection

It is a popular notion that forgiving others leads to inner peace and healing, and that is why we should forgive. But, looking at the cross, does it look like Jesus forgave us to bring himself inner peace and healing? The obvious answer is no. Jesus did not suffer and die for his own inner peace and healing, but for our good.

When someone injures us, we have a choice. Do we condemn them? Do we go one step further and plan and exact our revenge, too? Or do we condone or ignore their actions? Or do we forgive them? What is forgiveness if it neither condemns nor condones? You might have heard it said, love the sinner, hate the sin. That is somewhat accurate. When we condemn, we are rejecting the sinner and the sin. When we condone, we accept the sinner and the sin. Forgiveness separates the sin from the sinner and heals the sinner. (Kreeft, p. 222+)

I think the best image of forgiveness is Jesus on the cross. When you look at the cross, do you see forgiveness? Does that really look like forgiveness? How does Jesus dying on a cross show me that God forgives me?

Here are a few ways to think about it. Anything I do against God results in me owing a debt to God. I owed God something, and I did not deliver. However, there is nothing I could have or do to make up that debt, since God is already due everything I have and do. Instead of making

me pay a debt I cannot, God “forgives” that debt, for each and every one of us. The death of God-become-man, in Jesus, fully satisfies the debt because it is greater than all the sins of all of us. The forgiver takes the consequence originally due to the forgiven (death) and takes it upon themselves.

From another perspective, anything I do against God is a self-inflicted injury, separating me from God. This separation is, initially, a temporal, physical suffering but ultimately leads to death, because I have separated myself from source of my life. God, who is infinite in Mercy, entered into my suffering, by taking on human form himself. Because Jesus is God and ascended into the eternal and infinite after his death and resurrection, all of the suffering of all of humanity, even death itself, is borne within and overcome by the humanity of Jesus. By offering himself as a sacrifice on the cross for this purpose, Jesus makes it so. This is God’s great gift to us - we need only accept it. When we renounce our sins, return to him, and make his sacrifice our own through the Eucharist, we become part of his body. His wounds bore our sin and death, and “by his wounds we are healed.” (Is 53:5)

With those images, remember Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant: we must forgive each other as Jesus forgave us. How do we forgive someone? How do we know when we have forgiven someone, or when we have been forgiven by someone else? What does forgiveness from us look like?

There are two parts to forgiveness: words and action. If we know who they are, and what they did, and can communicate with them, we tell them, “I forgive you.” But what would that mean? What good does that do if only just to make them feel better? Perhaps they might not care? And what if it is not possible for me to tell them that? The more significant action is to model is the action of St. Stephen – when he was martyred, he *cried out*, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Jesus said the same from the cross.

To add some perspective, recall that in Scripture Satan is called “the accuser.” He tempts us here, but before God he accuses. A popular caricature of entering heaven is we meet St. Peter at heaven’s gate (as an aside, think about what the gate encloses – hint: not heaven). In this caricature, St. Peter has this list of things we have done. I think approaching heaven is more like what the prophet Zechariah describes. Satan, the accuser, is there and accusing everyone else before us who has ever hurt us. Some of them we may have never known. And thanks to our ancestors having eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we can now judge. In that moment, will you cry out “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”? What would you say if Jesus had already interceded for them to the Father to forgive them, and you were looking for the same forgiveness?

What can I do to develop my ability to forgive? We can start to notice our thoughts, feelings, emotions, imaginations, memories, sensations when we recognize that another person has done something to offend us. Does our imagination develop a plan for revenge or fear future injury? Do we keep bringing up memories of the offense? Do we feel angry, hurt, or indifferent? Does our body reveal a physical response to the offense, its memory, or our imagined revenge? As we notice and pay attention to these things, can we stop for long enough to pray for them?

Repentance | Contrition | Renunciation | Restitution

Definition

We focus in this section on the value of repentance, which, as explained in the reflection below, encompasses contrition (being truly sorry for our offenses), renunciation (rejecting whatever we have done as wrong), and restitution (making up for any harm that was done). In Scripture, the Greek work “metanoia” is translated as “repent.” It means to have a change of heart and mind. **So, we define the value of “Repentance” as the quality of intentionally and consistently working on identifying how we can better love God and neighbor, out of love for God, and out of contrition, renouncing past transgressions and making restitution for them.**

Scripture

Psalm 51:19: “My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a contrite, humbled heart, O God, you will not scorn.”

Luke 15:11-21 – “Coming to his senses he thought, ... I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.’”

Luke 19:1-10 – “Half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.”

John 20:21-23 – “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”

Acts 3 – “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away.”

1 John 1:5-10 – “If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins.”

2 Peter 3:1-10 – “He is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Reflection

At the beginning of Jesus's ministry, he often said, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” (Mk 1:15) What does it mean to repent? The word means a change of heart, of mind, of attitude, or of behaviors. It involves turning away from evil and turning towards God.

Remember that, however great our sin might be, not to despair. Be not afraid. God wishes for us to repent and wants to forgive us. God is like the prodigal son's father – God runs towards us to welcome us back, when we just turn towards him, after recognizing our sin.

There is no true repentance without actions that help us leave the old self behind, without renouncing those sins from which we turn away. We should take actions that help us detach from our attitudes, behaviors, and situations that lead us to sin. These actions typically include prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, but can be anything that helps us to detach.

For example, justice demands that we should restore someone to their original state, or at least give up unjust benefits and restore the community, if we discover we did something to injure them. We can model the tax collector Zaccheus who, after coming to believe in

Jesus, declared that he would give money to the poor and return money to those he overcharged. So, one way we are just is by making restitution for injuries that we cause to others. Sometimes we cannot make restitution, so a form of penance (fasting, almsgiving, or prayer) can be an alternative.

What makes repentance hard is that we need to recognize that we need to turn away from something. *We have to name it.* Once we do, then we can be sorry for it (contrition), know what we are letting go of and let go of it (renunciation), and make any restoration necessary out of justice (restitution).

We can work on our repentance through choosing to do the work necessary to identify what we need to change. One of the purposes of this spiritual audit is to help us do exactly that. Consider the Prodigal Son – he first “came to his senses.” He realized he was hungry. He realized he squandered his inheritance. He realized he had sinned against his father. But he had to recognize this sin first and then decide to leave it. Recognizing what we need to change typically is hard to do in the moment (otherwise we would have done the “right thing”), thus some form of audit or examination of conscience on a regular basis is helpful. When doing such an examination, also pay attention to various thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations, memories, imaginations that arise around different events and topics. Paying attention to such things enables us to unveil our motivations, past injuries for which we have built up defensive processes, thoughts that are guiding our actions, and so on. These things in turn help us identify not only actions for which we need to repent, but wounds for which we need healing which likely influenced those actions.

Mercy

Definition

The term “mercy” is commonly used, outside of the realm of Catholic theology, to mean restraint in action toward someone over whom one has the power to punish or harm. That understanding of mercy does not fall under the umbrella of “love” because it includes neither the motivation for the restraint, nor the benefit to the person who is not punished or harmed. Further that understanding is limited in its applicability to those who have power, making it a lesser virtue than compassion. This understanding also presumes that the good achieved through mercy is the relief from punishment or harm, whereas the greatest good that one can possibly receive is to share fully in the blessed life of God. The definition we use for mercy must also be sufficient to describe what Jesus did through his incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension, and his call for us to take up our crosses and follow him. It also must encompass how we engage others who are suffering, so even the definition in the catechism (which is limited to others who offend us) is insufficient in this regard. **So, we define the value of “being merciful” as the quality of entering into the suffering of another, giving oneself entirely to bear their suffering in their place, out of love of God and a desire that they may also share in the blessed life of God.**

Scripture

Genesis 1:3-5, 26: “God said: Let there be light, and there was light. God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” Evening came, and morning followed—the first day. ... Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness.”

Numbers 21:1-9: “From Mount Hor they set out by way of the Red Sea, to bypass the land of Edom, but the people’s patience was worn out by the journey; so the people complained against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in the wilderness, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!” So, the LORD sent among the people seraph serpents, which bite the people so that many of the Israelites died. Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned in complaining against the LORD and you. Pray to the LORD to take the serpents from us.” So, Moses prayed for the people, and the LORD said to Moses: Make a seraph and mount it on a pole, and everyone who has been bitten will look at it and recover. Accordingly, Moses made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever the serpent bit someone, the person looked at the bronze serpent and recovered.”

Psalms 78:38: “But God, being compassionate, forgave their sin; he did not utterly destroy them. Time and again he turned back his anger, unwilling to unleash all his rage.”

Psalms 106:45: “For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented in his abundant mercy.”

Hosea 6:6: “For it is mercy that I desire, not sacrifice.”

Isaiah 53:5: “But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed.”

Luke 4:18–19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."

John 3:14-17: "[J]ust as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

John 15:13: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Luke 9:23–24: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily... Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

James 2:13: "For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment."

Revelation 21:4: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain."

Reflection

The topic of Mercy presents us with an interesting challenge. There is little systematic theological development of the concept of Mercy notwithstanding the fact that it is central to the self-revelation of God. See *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, by Walter Kasper (Paulist Press, 2014), pages 9-11. So, we will have to venture out onto a limb here theologically at the risk of being corrected.

For starters, it should seem odd that in a work that emphasizes God's desire to heal us, to transform us into people who are holy, perfect, and merciful, that we would end with a topic that would be defined as merely restraint in punishment. To describe the greatest act of God's love in this way seems weak.

What about healing? We believe that mercy should be defined in a way that encompasses what Jesus did for us - an act that heals us. When Moses held up the serpent in the desert, the Israelites who were bitten by it *recovered*. Hence our definition of Mercy as "entering into the suffering of another, giving oneself entirely to bear their suffering in their place, out of love of God and a desire that they may also share in the blessed life of God." We will save for another work an exposition of this idea.

We think this definition would be supported by two modern saints.

St. Pope John Paul II wrote this about suffering and mercy (*Rise, Let Us Be On Our Way*, (Warner Books, 2004), p. 75.):

"I celebrated Mass and visited homes, especially the homes of sick people. ... I have always been very conscious of the fundamental importance of what the suffering contribute to the life of the church. I remember that at the beginning the sick intimidated me. I needed a lot of courage to stand before a sick person and enter, so to speak, into his physical and spiritual pain, not to betray discomfort, and to show at least a little loving compassion. Only later

did I begin to grasp the profound meaning of the mystery of human suffering. In the weakness of the sick, I saw emerging ever more clearly a new strength - the strength of mercy. In a sense, the sick provoke mercy. Through their prayers and sacrifices, they not only ask for mercy but create a "space for mercy," or better, open up spaces for mercy. By their illness and suffering they call forth acts of mercy and create the possibility for accomplishing them."

Consider that there is no greater suffering than being separated from, and not sharing in, the blessed life of our God. And would not that open up a space for God's mercy? And what would it mean to enter into that suffering? An example of that is provided by St. Faustina. In one of her prayers at a Holy Hour, she said (Diary, 927): "Jesus, I offer everything today for sinners. Let the blows of Your justice fall on me, and the sea of Your mercy engulf the poor sinners." Perhaps this is why she also said (Diary, 1804): "If the angels were capable of envy, they would envy us for two things: one is the ability to receive Holy Communion, and the other is suffering." To bear another's suffering for their sake, would be sharing in Jesus' gift of himself to the world.

Mercy, as a value, requires an awareness of another's suffering, and the gift of Wisdom to fully understand how God sees and loves them. It also requires the Wisdom to have perfected the virtue of Charity, so that a complete gift of oneself can be given out of love. To reach that point, we can just continue to notice how our thoughts, emotions, feelings, senses, memories, imaginations, and desires reveal our attachments to the things of this world and our lack of humility. By paying attention to these things, and seeking healing of them, we will be led to greater wisdom and the ability to choose to love more deeply. The fullness of Wisdom and Charity would then *provoke* one to utter a prayer like St. Faustina's.

In the end, it would seem that it does not matter how badly one wants to get to heaven. In the perfection of Mercy, where Wisdom and Charity are fulfilled, what really matters is how badly one wants everyone else to be there with you. Just like Jesus did.

This is what it means *to be love*.