

Sermon on Genuine Charity

Lessons: Leviticus 19:1-5, 9-18
Luke 10:25-37
The Doctrine of Charity 50-54

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Genuine charity itself is prudent and wise. The other charity is spurious, because it is of the will or of good only, and not at the same time of the understanding, or of truth. (The Doctrine of Charity 54)

Genuine charity is from good and truth working together. Without good and truth working together as one, charity is not genuine. When charity is done from good or the will only and not from truth or the understanding conjoined with good or the will, it is not genuine but is called spurious. And as the passages we read indicate, spurious charity is capable of doing great harm to the good. Spurious charity of itself is not necessarily evil, rather it is charity practiced without discrimination so that it can sometimes result in good but just as often result in evil by aiding those who have a wicked intent.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan we remember that the Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds of the man who had been beat up and badly injured by robbers. We usually don't think of oil and wine as something with which to treat wounds, but there is a reason that oil and wine are mentioned -- a spiritual reason. Oil corresponds to good, and wine corresponds to truth. They represent good and truth working together. And good and truth working together make genuine charity. Genuine charity has power. It is really is able to help people -- just as it helped the man wounded by the thieves.

Genuine faith and genuine charity must exist together and not separately. If they are separated then the charity is not genuine nor is the faith genuine, and not being genuine, they are then only natural and not spiritual.

We are not born into charity and faith. We must come into these during our life in the world. We first must be educated and taught truths in order that we may know what is good and also what is evil as well as the difference between these. We learn truths first so that we may learn to do what is good. Learning truths is not an end in itself. The purpose of learning truths is that those truths may be lived and thus do what is useful and

charitable.

We read in The Doctrine of Charity 93: *At this day, for a man to be a man, he ought to be charity in form.*

Another way of reading this passage could be: *In our present state, so that a person may be truly human, he must become charity in form.*

What makes us truly human is the joining together of good and truth in ourselves. And this good and truth, if we are willing to receive it, comes from Him who is truly Human above all -- the Lord in His Divine Human.

The Doctrine of Charity 96 goes on to explain that by *charity in form* is meant that a person's life is charity. A person whose life is charity is a person who lives and puts into practice the truths of the Word. Such a person does not merely quote passages -- he or she lives them! Occasionally we meet such people. Charity 98, says that a sincere person, who thinks nothing contrary to charity, can be known from his face and voice, but with difficulty.

We first learn truths. All truths look to good or charity as their end or goal. Truth then teaches good and leads to good so that they may be joined together.

This is the ideal, but our self-love (or proprium), that which in us always looks to ourselves as being number one, tries constantly to separate and keep separate good and truth.. Our love of self is under the influence of the hells, and the hells like nothing better than to keep the truths we may know separated from good. Truth separated from good is faith alone. It is believing but not doing. It is talking the talk, but not walking the walk.

Faith or truth alone is not genuine and cannot save, while charity without truth is spurious (or hypocritical charity) and can result in good being done to the evil. Some of us tend more to being in faith alone, while others tend more toward being in charity alone. Yet more importantly to us is that we all have a tendency toward being in both faith alone and in charity alone. We have both states present within us, and we may alternate between them.

For example, when we think and dwell on the truths of our Church and on its doctrine, but give little thought to putting those truths to work in our

lives, and even less time in actually applying those truths to our lives, then we are in a life of faith alone. It is relatively easy to come to some understanding of the truths and doctrine of the Church, to have those truths and doctrine in our memories. But it requires reflection and mental effort to see how those truths actually have application to our lives. When we try to see how a truth is to be applied to our lives, we must take some time and make some effort. We must reflect on the truths we know. Even more difficult, once we see how such truths apply to our lives, is the actual application.

By nature most of us are opposed to changes in our lifestyle. We are usually very comfortable and contented to live as we live, even when it is a worldly life, and as a result we resist the rule and order of spiritual life. We may be content to know the truths of the Church, but not care so much to see the application of those truths, and we may resist any application. Our natural life left to itself desires to enjoy the pleasures and delights of the world and body only, and wants to keep the truths of the Word and of Doctrine a thing of the memory only. Our natural tendencies work to keep us in a state of faith alone.

Yet at the same time, those same natural tendencies may motivate us to do good to others. Those natural tendencies try to persuade us that we have an inborn ability, and knowledge of how to do good to the neighbor. Acting under the influence of these natural tendencies we may think that we really do not need to learn and reflect on what it is to really do good -- all we simply need to do is to go out and do what is charitable. It is this kind of thinking that is referred to in The Doctrine of Charity 52:

This is what the simple do. They say, "Every man is equally my neighbor," and also "It is not my business to investigate his quality, but this is regarded by God; I must simply help my neighbor." But this is not loving the neighbor. " (The Doctrine of Charity 52)

By the simple here are not meant just those who are unlearned or ignorant, but ourselves when we start thinking, "I must simply help my neighbor," without regard to the quality of the neighbor and the kind of help that is given.

The member of the Church is quite capable of being in both faith alone and good alone at the same time, for he may believe the truths of the Church

yet never apply them to his life and at the same time he may go about trying to help his neighbor with little thought given to doing this with prudence and wisdom. The danger is that we may think that because we believe the truths of the Church and helping the neighbor, that we are living according to the precepts of the Church. We may content ourselves with such a thought and not see that in our lives we have separated charity from faith and that we are keeping them separated. And further, we will not see that our faith, being without charity, is nothing but a faith of the memory and not spiritual at all, and that our charity, being devoid of truth, is a spurious charity and also not at all spiritual. We can separate faith from charity in our own lives and yet appear to ourselves and to others to be living a life leading to Heaven. In living such a life, interiorly we are separating the Divine from the Human even while thinking we believe in only one Lord in one person.

It is easy to keep faith separate from charity in our lives. Our hereditary tendencies incline us to separate them, and the hells urge and influence us to separate them. How then do we unite faith and charity in our life? We can begin to unite them when we live according to this truth: that the first act of charity is to look to the Lord and shun evils because they are sins and that the second act of charity is to do goods. The first and second acts of charity actually make one, for when we do the first act of charity, that is, when we look to the Lord, and shun evils as sins, and then we do the good of charity. Let us reflect upon these passages from The Doctrine of Charity:

Before the good a person does is the good of charity, evil must first be put away, because it is contrary to charity; and this is done by repentance.

Since evil must first be known for the reason that it is to be put away, the Decalogue was the first of the Word and ... is also the first of the doctrine of the Church. All are initiated into the Church through knowing evil, and because it is against God, not doing it.

... when anyone does not do evil he does good. It can therefore be taken as a maxim, that to shun evil as sin is to do good. (Charity 27, 29-32.)

Amen.

LESSONS

Leviticus 19:1-5, 9-18

¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

² "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God *am* holy.

³ 'Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I *am* the LORD your God.

⁴ 'Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I *am* the LORD your God.

⁵ 'And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will.

⁹ 'When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

¹⁰ And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather *every* grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

¹¹ 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.

¹² And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD.

¹³ 'You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.

¹⁴ You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I *am* the LORD.

¹⁵ 'You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.

¹⁶ You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD.

¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

¹⁸ You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading *of it*?"

²⁷ So he answered and said, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,*' and '*your neighbor as yourself.*' "

²⁸ And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."

²⁹ But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

³⁰ Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

³¹ Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

³⁴ So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

³⁵ On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you."

³⁶ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

³⁷ And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

The Doctrine of Charity 50-54

50. The quality of the neighbor is according to the quality of the good in a person; or such as a person is, such is he the neighbor. That all men are not equally the neighbor as another, the Lord's parable of the man wounded by robbers teaches, where it is declared that "he is neighbor who showed mercy on him." [Luke 10:29-37.]

51. Whoever does not distinguish the neighbor according to the quality of good and truth in him may be deceived a thousand times, and his charity become confused and at length no charity. A man devil may exclaim, "I am a neighbor: do good to me." And if you do good to him he may kill you or others. You are placing a knife or a sword in his hand.

52. This is what the simple do. They say, "Every man is equally my neighbor," and also "It is not my business to investigate his quality, but this is regarded by God; I must simply help my neighbor." But this is not loving the neighbor.

He who loves a neighbor from genuine charity finds out what sort of a person he is, and does good to him with discrimination, in accordance with the quality of his good.

53. In the other life such simple people are removed from others and kept apart; for if they come among diabolical spirits they are drawn into doing good to them, and into doing evil to the good. These spirits cry out, "Set me free, help me!" This is a very great strength which the evil acquire for themselves. Without the help of the simple, and as it were conjunction with them, they are not strong at all; but together with those they have deceived by the name of "neighbor," they are strong.

54. Genuine charity itself is prudent and wise. The other charity is spurious, because it is of the will or of good only, and not at the same time of the understanding, or of truth.

AMEN