

The Virtue of Charity

I. The Virtue Itself

A. Definition

a. “a supernatural habit infused by God into the will, by which we love God for himself above all things, and ourselves and our neighbor for God” (Royo, 401).

- love for ourselves or another for any other motivation than the Goodness of God is not charity

b. St. Thomas defines charity as “friendship with God.” Thus sanctifying grace is presumed and a mutual loving and being loved

1. The nature of God as Charity

- loving and being loved
- perfect *agape* and perfect *eros*

2. The vocation of the human person as created as *Imago Dei*

- to love and be loved

c. Charity is the most imminent of the virtues, not only as it unites us with God, but also because it is the form of all the virtues

1. No other virtue can be perfected without charity

B. The Act of Charity and its Increase

a. The will goes forth from itself to rest in God

- will is drawn to the object of its love and becomes one with it, becoming base by loving what is base and becoming greater by loving what is above

2. Charity can increase indefinitely in this life

- An increase in charity is only possible by a more intense act of the habit

3. Remiss acts

- Such can paralyze the soul by preventing any growth in the intensity of charity and thus essential glory

- The grade of charity will not diminish by remiss acts, but the fervor of charity (zeal) does diminish.
- Remiss acts have their corresponding accidental glory in heaven and serve to prevent complete loss of charity, but keep soul paralyzed and impedes the attainment of sanctity.

4. Conclusions

- “a single more intense act of charity is of greater value than countless remiss or lukewarm acts”
- “The conversion of one sinner to lofty perfection is more pleasing to God and of greater glory to God than the conversion of many sinners to a lukewarm and imperfect life”
- “A preacher and spiritual director is more pleasing to God if he converts a single sinner and leads him to Christian perfection than the one who converts many sinners but leaves them imperfect and lukewarm.”

C. The Objects of Charity

a. The love of God causes us to love whatever pertains to God

1. love of God
2. love of self
3. love of neighbor

b. A single virtue of divine charity

1. “...the love of charity with which we love our neighbor is exactly the same charity with which we love God. There are not two charities but only one...” (Royo, 410).
2. Example of Mother Teresa and “You did it to Me”

D. Sins Opposed to Charity

- a. Hatred – against charity directly
- b. Spiritual sloth – against joy
- c. Envy – against joy
- d. Discord (thoughts, between wills)
- e. Contention (words)
- f. Strive, schism or war (deeds)

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