

“Virtues to Live by”

Before You Begin – An overview for teachers

Love of Neighbour - Compassion

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:37-39)

Definition

LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR – you do not think only about yourself but are ready to help meet the needs of other people. You understand that anyone who is in need, whoever they are or wherever they live, is your neighbour and in need of your compassion and care. Jesus asks you to love everyone which is sometimes not easy, but if you practise love when it is easy to do, you will become, with God’s help, able to love even when it is difficult and when you are not loved in return.

Biblical sources:

“But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ He said, ‘The one who took pity on him.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (Luke 10:29-37 from The Parable of the Good Samaritan)

“When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” (from the Feeding of the 5000, Mark 6:30-44)

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25: 34-41 from the Parable of the Final Judgement)

Why do we practice love for our neighbour?

Together with our love of God, love of our neighbour is the greatest commandment; it is central to Jesus' mission. To love is the innate vocation of every human being – there is no alternative to love; it is the permanent, supreme and fundamental virtue that gives life its meaning and purpose. Love is not simply a noun – a thing - nor is it simply a feeling, it is active and only exists in being shared and given away freely. Love is the ultimate gift from God and is, in turn, our gift to each other: 'we love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19).

How do we practice love of our neighbour?

You can do all kinds of thoughtful things to show love. Sharing your time, your things, your skills and talents in the service of others is also a way to show love for your neighbour. But the supreme way to show love for your neighbour is to recognise that love "is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and it is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people's sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Key Words:

Love, neighbour, compassion

Signs that you Love your Neighbour:

I treat others as I want to be treated

I say kind and loving things

I share my things with others

I do little things for others that make them happy

I show affection

I notice when someone needs my help

I show I care by listening to others

I help people and animals in need

Reflection Questions:

Am I ever too busy to show love?

How do I show my love?

Am I attentive to the needs of those around me?

Who is my neighbour?

Quotes:

"Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being". (FC, 11; CCC, 2393)

"Love is the virtue by which we love God above all else and our neighbour as ourselves." (CCC, 1822)

"Personal behaviour is fully human when it is born of love, manifests love and is ordered to love. This truth also applies in the social sphere; Christians must be deeply convinced witnesses of this, and they are to

show by their lives how love is the only force (cf. 1 Cor 12:31-14:1) that can lead to personal and social perfection, allowing society to make progress towards the good.” (The Social Doctrine of the Church, 580)

“Christian charity truly extends to all, without distinction of race, creed, or social condition: it looks for neither gain nor gratitude. For as God loved us with an unselfish love, so also the faithful should in their charity care for the human person himself, loving him with the same affection with which God sought out man. Just as Christ, then, went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity as a sign that the kingdom of God had come (cf. Matt. 9:35ff; Acts 10:38), so also the Church, through her children, is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted. For them, she gladly spends and is spent (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15), sharing in their joys and sorrows, knowing of their longings and problems, suffering with them in death's anxieties. To those in quest of peace, she wishes to answer in fraternal dialogue, bearing them the peace and the light of the Gospel.” (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church [Ad Gentes], 12)

Catholic sources

“Love is the free self-giving of the heart” (YouCat 402)

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

“Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.” (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

“Let us always meet each other with a smile, for a smile is the beginning of love.” (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

“Only the simple appeal of the commandment of love – constant, humble and unpretentious, free of vanity but firm in its conviction and dedication to others – can save us.” (Pope Francis)

“The power of love is a service that resurrects what is destroyed, no matter how much it is so. Its unattainable and unquestionable source is God’s loving fatherhood and motherhood.” (Pope Francis)

Other sources

“Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.” (Martin Luther King)

“In friendship or in love, the two side by side raise hands together to find what one cannot reach alone.” (Kahlil Gibran)