

# “Virtues to Live by”

## CHARITY

### Before You Begin – An overview for teachers

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:9)

#### Definition

Charity is love, a virtue through which we love God above all else and we love our neighbour as we love ourselves. You accept someone as they are, you care for them, and care what happens to them. You always think about the other person rather than thinking about yourself. When you love you put into practice the “golden rule”, to treat others with the respect and kindness that you want for yourself. You show love for people you do not know by simple acts of kindness and by wanting the best for them.

#### Virtue to Live By

*I show my love for God through my loving concern for everyone, especially those in need of my help.*

*I treat others with the respect and kindness that I would want for myself.*

#### Biblical sources

"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)

"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)

"We love because God first loved us... people cannot love God, whom they have not seen, if they do not love their brothers and sisters, whom they have seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: all who love God must love their brother and sister also." (1 John 4: 20-21)

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." (Colossians 3:14)

"If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2)

"Do everything in love." (1 Cor. 16:14)

"Above all, love one another deeply." (1 Peter 4:8)

"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God lives in them." (1 John 4:16)

"Love your enemies." (Matthew 5:44)

"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you." (Matthew 7:12)

### **Catholic sources**

"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)

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

"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)

"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)

### **Why Practise Charity: Love of Neighbour?**

There is no alternative to love. Love is the most important virtue, because God is love and so love comes from God. The gift of love is always dynamic, a force that sustains us and seeks to transform and bring wholeness and newness of life. Love is, therefore, inescapably outgoing, it cannot be kept to oneself but exists in being shared.

### **How do we Practise Charity?**

We can show our love for God, who has given us the gift of love, by spending time with God in times of quiet reflection, prayer and worship. We also show our love for God by the way we love others. We love others by caring for them and treating them with tenderness. We also show our loving concern for those we do not know by charitable works and wanting the best for them.

### **Key Words:**

Love, Neighbour, Charity

### **Signs of living the virtue of Charity:**

I treat others as I would want them to treat me

I do simple acts of kindness to show my love

I show my love for God by caring for others

I give my time to help others

I share what I have with others

### **Reflection Questions:**

How do you show your love for God?

Why is love the most important virtue?

How do you show your love for other people