

Inquiry Session: Charity

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the OCIA

Reflect on Your Experience

If someone you care about is in need, you help that person. Why? You are not interested in a return on your goodness; you simply help.

For Reflection . . .

From where does the motivation come to reach out to someone you do not know and assist that person in some way?

Hear the Good News About Charity

Jesus commands his followers to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Love, or charity, is one of the Theological Virtues. It is a gift from God, a virtue within us that has its origins in God. Sacred Scripture describes God himself as pure love (see 1 John 4:8).

God the Father loves his Son, Jesus. So, too, Jesus loves us with the same sort of love. How far does God go in loving us? The love of Christ unto Death upon the Cross proclaims forever that God will stop at nothing in loving us. To save us from sin and to free us for authentic life, Jesus suffered and died.

When we are impelled to serve others without material return, we are mirroring the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. Love, or charity, is its own reward. It produces in us the gifts of joy, peace, and mercy.

Read the Word of God

John 13:33-34

(Jesus' double command of love)

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

(A description of the character of charity)

1 John 4:16-19

(God is love.)

Respond Through Action

There are legitimate issues of self-interest that motivate some of our decisions and actions. For example, we all need and seek nourishment, reasonable bodily and mental health, shelter, and work. But self-interest cannot drive all of our decisions and actions. We are enriched as individuals when we go beyond ourselves and show authentic love to others.

For Reflection . . .

What are the obstacles in your life that prevent you from living the virtue of charity? Why is it sometimes so difficult to love others?

Witness to the Gospel

SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA
1910–1997

Teresa was acclaimed throughout the world for her selfless work on behalf of the poor and marginalized. She was born in Albania, but her ministry as a religious sister took her to India. In 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity and established a home for the dying, a home for children, and a leper's village. She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts. By 1980 the Missionaries of Charity had established houses in countries previously closed to missionaries: Ethiopia, Yemen, and Russia. At Teresa's death the Missionaries of Charity served in 107 centers throughout the world.