

Deceased: father of Carl
Leveling, '50. Two special
intentions.

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"Charity is kind, is not
puffed up."

Here's The Doctrine. Judge Your Practice Of It.

Love of our neighbor--fraternal charity--is a theological virtue provided that we love God Himself in our neighbor; or, in other words, that we love our neighbor for God's sake--because He has commanded this. If we love our neighbor solely for our own sake, because of his usefulness to us, this is not the kind of charity Christ talks about.

St. Thomas Aquinas develops this doctrine very clearly. What follows is his teaching with a few practical twists. With his principles in mind you can better judge for yourself to what extent you are truly loving your neighbor: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This God commands.

As God is the supreme Good, the universal Good existing above us, it is necessary for the perfection of divine love that our whole heart should be, in a certain sense, turned toward God. This degree of divine love is expressed by the precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart."

The perfection of charity here indicated, according to St. Thomas, is not charity to be immediately realized here and now, but a charity, a divine love toward which all men ought to direct their minds and hearts.

Our neighbor is not the universal good existing above us, as God is; he is a particular good. Hence, we are not commanded to love him with our whole heart, but commanded to love him as we love ourselves. Three consequences follow from this.

Qualities Of Fraternal Charity.

First. Our love of neighbor must be sincere. It is of the very nature of love to wish well to the object or person loved. Love, therefore, tends toward two things: to the person to whom we are wishing well, and to the good itself which we wish him.

Although both these things are said to be loved, that object is truly loved to which we wish some good. For the good thing which we wish to another person is only loved relatively, that is, in relationship to something else, as aspirin for the relief of a headache, or morning checks for the sake of a week end.

Now it is incorrect to say that we really and sincerely love an object which we want to destroy; and as many of the things which we use are destroyed, we only love such things relatively. For example: we consume mashed potatoes in eating, or beef steak, or pills. In all such cases, we are truly loving ourselves but are only loving these other things relatively, because of the use which they are to us.

It is clear that every man does, by nature, truly love himself, in so far as he wishes good things, benefits, to himself, such as happiness, virtue, knowledge, and the necessities of life. But all those things which are of use to him man does not truly love in themselves. Rather (and this is important), he loves the service they render him, and he always prefers himself to them if his love of himself is what it should be.

Now this proposition is as true with regard to persons, as it is with regard to things. We love some men only because they are of use to us. When this is the case, it is clear that we do not truly love them as we love ourselves. He that loves another because he is of service to him, or affords him gratification, proves that he loves himself, not his neighbor as himself. Because he seeks only usefulness and profit and good times from his friend and not his friend himself, he can only be said to love his friend in the same sense in which he is said to love mashed potatoes, beef steak, or pills--that is, not loving our neighbor as ourselves by wishing well to him, but rather loving him because of his usefulness to us--using him as an advantage to us.