

CARITAS/CHARITY

Newspaper columnist and minister George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me."

Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you are getting a divorce. That will really hurt him." With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" And she did it with enthusiasm. Acting "as if." For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?"

"Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." Her actions had changed her feelings. Motion resulted in emotion. The ability to love is established not so much by a fervent promise as often repeated deeds.

Love/ Caritas is fundamental to Spirituality. It is the core, essence, and kernel of Spiritual experience. St. John says "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (I John 4:8).

Love of God and Love of neighbour, easy to talk about; but difficult to live out. In spite of the effort, love will change us and our surroundings. Fidelity to God and charity toward others will challenge others to action. All we need to do is live like Jesus did. If we can't make that commitment, then we should take one step at a time toward our Creator and our fellow human. And we should not worry, for God's Spirit will lead the way.

Love of God lives every waking moment of the day. Love of neighbour extends beyond our family and friends to strangers, especially to the poor, the sick, and the sinner. Love of neighbour knows no national borders or class distinctions or barriers of any kind because God knows no such impediments.

Love is power. Love is wisdom. True power is love and true wisdom is love. Yet power is not wisdom without love, and wisdom is not powerful, in the ultimate sense, without love. Love is the glue that holds everything together. It is a divine law that holds even the atoms together. Without the force of love tethering the electrons to the nucleus of the atom, we have free radicals and destruction.

Love is the force of integration that overcomes all disintegration. Love is the energy that crystallizes our actions into permanence. When the Bible says that the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is, it is talking about love. When something that is done in love passes through the flame of love, it crystallizes into permanence. When love is lacking, the flame of love consumes the deed. Love is the Holy Spirit and the sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven or redeemed. Without love, all come to naught. With love, we become immortal. We become God, for God is love.

The phrase *Deus Caritas est* in the original Greek —is in line with the translation "God is charity" (1 John 4.8) in contrast with the translation from other versions that say "God is love"

Charity is held to be the ultimate perfection of the human spirit because it is said to both glorify and reflect the nature of God. Confusion can arise from the multiple meanings of the English word "love". The love that is *Caritas* is distinguished by its origin, being divinely infused into the soul, and by its residing in the *will* rather than emotions, regardless of what emotions it stirs up. According to Aquinas, charity is an absolute requirement for happiness, which he holds as man's last goal.

Love has two parts: love of God (Dt 6.5) and love of neighbour (Leviticus 19.18)

The best expression of love can be found in St. Paul's letter to I Corinthians Chapter 13: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing."

"Charity never fails: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect comes, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now, we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abides faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity".

Both the words *charity* and *love* usually translate it *Caritas* (agapē): sometimes it uses one, then sometimes the other, for the same concept. Most other English translations, both before and since, do not; instead, throughout they use the same more direct English word *love* so that the unity of the teaching should not be in doubt. Love can have other meanings in English, but as used in the New Testament it almost always refers to the virtue of *Caritas*.

Many times when charity is mentioned in English-language Bibles, it refers to "love of God", which is a spiritual love that is extended from man to God. One example is "charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8), which forms the basis of perfect contrition.

We can certainly love through charity towards the homeless, poor, the orphans, the prisoners and above all our own in our communities. In all our houses if we can keep a window open for dialogue, sincerity, active interaction, recreation, a little bit of humour and plenty of understanding it will be certainly a never ending feast of our prayer life; in addition to this keep open another window for active love for the poor and assign a time do the job of caring and sharing some of our food and clothing with these brothers and sisters around us then our prayer rooms will vibrate with resounding rewards from our Blessed Lord. Love is the key to happiness.

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