



Love your neighbor
as yourself.

Matthew 22:39

**St. Brendan the Navigator Parish
Small Faith Sharing Cell Group
Teaching #50: Living Together in Charity**

Shared by Fr. Hyacinth
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Living Together in Charity

“Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom 13:8-10).

In these words, St. Paul revisits our Lord’s summary of the Law of God; a summary he gives when a lawyer asks him which is the greatest commandment (Matt 22:36-40). St. Paul, like his Master Jesus Christ, teaches that the whole Law of God finds fulfillment in love; love of God and love of neighbor. For us Christians, this would mean that all the obligations of Christian life are summed up in love, or charity. This love or charity towards others is so important that Paul likens it to a debt. I would immediately imagine that this time of Covid-19, with all the protocols that we have to follow in various places and

circumstances, continues to offer us an opportunity to examine our patience and our ability to love and to be charitable toward our neighbor. Who would have imagined that wearing a mask, for instance, could be an act of charity?

Charity involves a sense of mutual responsibility; the responsibility to live in the human community as a reconciled people. In the spirit of reconciliation, the proper reaction to an offense can only be motivated by mercy towards the offender and the desire for peace. Reconciliation is the path to peace. In the Christian tradition, reconciliation with fellow humans is an indispensable condition for a true relationship with God. Jesus tells us: "If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). St. Cyprian makes a comment on these verses and says: "God can be appeased only by prayers that make peace. To God, the better offering is peace, brotherly harmony and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (as cited in CCC 2845).

Our present world definitely needs this spirit of reconciliation and charity. People's ideologies in politics, the economy, health, the environment, and even ideologies about who we are as humans, are dividing and setting the human community ever apart. Curiously, everyone seems to be worried that there is division in our societies; but it seems the more we are worried, the more we are drifting away from each other. Each of us, as much as we are aware of our limitations and shortcomings, is invited to be open to charity and reconciliation; but also, to reach out to others in the same service of love, reconciliation and peace.

For us Christians, the call to love goes deep down to our prayers. Jesus tells us: “if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:19-20). Jesus guarantees that he is present in the community that is united and in agreement, as they pray in his name. The unity of a community reflects the very reality of God to whom that community prays; a God who is Trinity, the perfect communion of love.

In this light, we feel particularly challenged because of the prevailing tendencies towards opposition and division in our present world. Maybe this is the time to reawaken the Christian spirit of community. Maybe this is the time to be honest about placing the common good over opinions and ideologies.

Let us pray for the courage and the humility to practice fraternal charity. And our prayers, so that they may rise up to God, should be united in Christ and reflected in the way we live.

Reflection Questions:

What part of this teaching was particularly striking to you?

Do you agree with me that there is a prevailing tendency towards division in our societies? If yes, what do you think about it?

Please suggest practical ways that a Christian can contribute to the growth or harmony in a diverse society.