

HOW TO LIVE MERCIFULLY

January 31, 2016 (JER 1:4-5, 17-19, 12-14, 1 COR 12:31 - 13:13, LK 4:21-30)

"Be just and fair in all you do. ... No one ever loses by being generous, noble-hearted, and courteous" (St. Francis de Sales).

Pope Benedict explained that there are three inseparable elements to being Catholic:

1. Proclaiming the word of God
2. Celebrating the sacraments
3. Exercising the ministry of charity

(Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Est Caritas*, 2005)

(In other words, being Catholic means to believe; celebrate what you believe; act on what you believe and celebrate.)

What is "Charity?"

Saint Paul reminds us: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13).

To be faithful to the meaning of the Gospel, "love" is best understood as selfless love felt by Christians for their fellow human being. Therefore, a more accurate translation of "love" would be "charity."

Love is Charity and Charity is a respect for others and a selfless love for others for no other reason than they are human.

Pope Benedict later explained that the primary way of charity is justice, "or, in Paul VI's words, 'the minimum measure' of it. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them" (*Caritas In Veritate*, 2009, #6-7).

Pope Benedict continued, "Every Christian is called to practice this charity. This is the institutional path – we might also call it the political path – of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly..." (*Caritas In Veritate*, #7).

Therefore, "true mercy, the mercy God gives to us and teaches us, demands justice" (Pope Francis) – the institutional path, the political path, what is commonly known as "social justice" but is what the Catholic Church simply calls "justice", the mature version of charity.

Living mercifully – with justice – may not be easy. In our society that is marked by individualism, you may not be accepted. Jesus understands this. In the verses immediately preceding today's reading, after reading from Isaiah, Jesus sensed the crowd's incredulity, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place" (LK 4:24).

How to live mercifully? Live a life marked by fairness and charity; generosity and courtesy (cf. St. Francis de Sales). Trust in the Lord's protection ("They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD" [JER 1: 19]).



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