

The Tenth Step: Commitment to Charity

“Charity” is another name for “love.” But the love we are talking about here is not romantic love, it is not sentimental love, it is not a warm fuzzy feeling, it is God’s love for us and our love for God in Jesus Christ.

Charity is one of the three “theological virtues,” the other two being faith and hope. These three virtues are at the center of our Christian life. They are “gifts” of God that we receive at Baptism. For, when we were baptized into Christ, we were given the gift to love, to hope, and to believe.

Each of these virtues needs to be nurtured. We have been given the gift of God’s own love that has been poured into our heart, but we must grow in this virtue of love by practicing love for God and each other every day.

Saint Paul tells us that the love of God has been poured in to our heart. Saint John tells us that God is love. Jesus tells us that the most important commandment is to love God and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus goes further. Not only must we love our neighbor, we must love our enemy as well. This doesn’t mean we have a warm fuzzy feeling of love for our enemy; but it does mean that we try to do good to the enemy even when the enemy tries to do evil to us. We conquer evil by love, not by retaliation.

What does commitment to charity look like? Commitment to charity means we love God above all things by making Jesus Christ the center and core of our life. It means we love God by doing God’s commandments as Jesus taught us. It means we love God by preferring God’s will to our own will, for only when we do God’s will are we at peace.

Commitment to charity means doing what is good to others, especially to those who are most in need: the poor, the outcast, those who live on the margins of society. Such love is expressed in doing good rather than in feelings and emotions.

When we are committed to love, our faith is on fire. We believe because we love, and we love because we believe. Because we love God above all things, we do all for the sake of the kingdom of God. Because we love Jesus above all, we follow him in the way of discipleship. Because we love our neighbor and even our enemy, we try to find ways to do what is good and best for them.

Consider the people with whom you come into contact every day, people you know and those you do not know. What good can you do for them to express your love for them? Consider your relationship with God in Jesus Christ? How can you love God more fervently so that your faith will be on fire?