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Love as Jesus Loved

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Abstract

In the life of the civilized age, people should use civilization to help each other understand, support, and love each other more, but in reality, people use civilization to destroy each other. So today's Gospel invites each of us to recognize each other in the eyes of true love. To get a loving gaze, one needs to imitate the love of Jesus. If and only if the man can do it.

Keywords: Love, God is love, Gospel

³¹ Khi Giu-đa ra khỏi phòng tiệc ly, Đức Giê-su nói: “Giờ đây, Con Người được tôn vinh, và Thiên Chúa cũng được tôn vinh nơi Người.

³² Nếu Thiên Chúa được tôn vinh nơi Người, thì Thiên Chúa cũng sẽ tôn vinh Người nơi chính mình, và Thiên Chúa sắp tôn vinh Người.

^{33a} “Hỡi anh em là những người con bé nhỏ của Thầy, Thầy còn ở với anh em một ít lâu nữa thôi.

³⁴ Thầy ban cho anh em một điều răn mới là anh em hãy yêu thương nhau; anh em hãy yêu thương nhau như Thầy đã yêu thương anh em.

³⁵ Mọi người sẽ nhận biết anh em là môn đệ của Thầy ở điểm này: là anh em có lòng yêu thương nhau.”

Ga 13, 31-33a.34-35

Introduction

During the time, human beings are in every period, every gender or every range, all of us agree that love is super strengthen and being over all of the things. The Bible also showed us to determine this: “No flood can extinguish love nor river submerge it.”¹. So there are many books or songs or poetries that express love, but they cannot give enough meaning.

¹ Dc 8,7



Thus, the love of humans is large. But the love of God is more than that many times. There are some levels of love, then showing how Jesus loves us and the ways we should love each other.

Kinds of love

There are three kinds of love according to ethics: love of Eros, love of Philia, and love of Agape. The love of Eros is the source of Greek: Erostatas. It means "the intimate love." It is arranged for lustful love or libido (tình yêu dục vọng, sự ham muốn thể xác)². The love of Philia. This kind of love is higher and goes beyond the love of Eros. It is called friendship love because it shows loyal of heart, sacrifice, appreciation, and other forms of 'high', more precious than love that has nothing to do with sex.³ (Tình yêu này nói lên lòng trung thành, sự hy sinh và thể hiện sự đánh giá cao và các hình thức khác 'cao quý' hơn tình yêu không liên quan đến tình dục). The Love of Agape is the noblest and most superior kind of love. This is considered universal love, giving without asking for anything in return. This love is free, selfless, and charitable even though our object is an enemy to me. Jesus showed this love for humanity. Therefore, Jesus also invites us to love as He loved.

The entire Bible simulates God's love for man, made manifest in the person of Jesus. Today's Gospel shows us that Jesus imitated that love through the love of the Father: "Just as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you, and you also love each other with this love."⁴. This is also the new commandment that Jesus wants from his disciple.

We need to clarify what is the new commandment that the Lord wants to give to the disciples. I give you a new commandment that you love one another. The new commandment about love, in fact, is not new because all love comes from God, and God has exercised that love in many different forms: "God has spoken I the past to our ancestors through the prophets, in many different ways, although never completely; but in our times he has spoken definitively to us through his Son."⁵. So the new commandment here is understood as a new way of love. This way goes far beyond the old love way, the traditional way of love. The culmination of traditional love only stops at the level of justice: an eye for an eye, a commandment for command. This new love has a clear origin: From the Father: Just as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. This new love is also expressed in Jesus himself.

That is self-destructive love. Saint Paul tells us that he was "innately God." He is equal to the Father and is from all eternity. But He accepted to be human as frail as we are except for sin. Indeed, the Bible shows us the poverty of His birth to a humiliating death on the

² X. <https://el.cm-sobral-monte-agraco.pt/3-types-love-eros>. Truy cập ngày 24/5/2022.

³ X. <https://el.cm-sobral-monte-agraco.pt/3-types-love-eros>. Truy cập ngày 24/5/2022.

⁴ John 15,9

⁵ Hebrews 1,1-2

cross. St. Pholo described it this way: "Jesus Christ was originally God, but... He died on a cross."⁶.

It is love that serves: love that cannot be put into words. In other words, to love one another, we must have a spirit of service to one another. Saint James affirms faith for us "Faith without works is dead faith."⁷ Likewise, it is impossible to love without a spirit of service to one another. Jesus taught us how to love through service. He served in many forms and with all different audiences, including those on the margins of society; socially excluded people. For example, Jesus was at the table with sinners; The Lord washed the feet of the disciples: You and the Lord, I wash the feet. Also, wash each other's feet.

That is self-sacrificing love. Because of love, God accepts all human suffering or sins with His own death. The pages of the Gospels also present every detail of His passion: He was counted among sinners and died on the cross. One of the heaviest punishments at that time. However, Jesus still insists on loving people: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."⁸.



Because of that great love, today's Gospel shows us that God has glorified Him and given Him every name that is above every name. For this same reason, he invites his disciples to imitate him in the practice of love.

The way to have "new love". The prerequisite for this love is that there is no shadow of the figure of "Judas". Judas represents lies, hatred, jealousy, envy... because they are contrary to God's love. In life, if we know how to give up the ego, the selfishness, or the bad in us, surely the image of "Judas" (i.e., hatred, jealousy, envy...) will not be able to exist in us. On the contrary, if we glorify our ego, our relationships with everyone, even those close to us, will break down. Because we honor our ego, God will not be able to honor us. Let us, therefore, cast out Judas as the Gospel says: "After Judas came out of the Upper Room."

As a consequence of love, Jesus performed the Father's love immediately. He was glorified by the Father. In life, if we can remove "the figure of Judas" from us and we follow the commandment as the Lord commanded, we will not only receive that consequence right now and now but also in the future. The result is to be glorified by Jesus as the Father has glorified him: Now, the Son of Man is about to be glorified. When he was glorified, he also

⁶ Pl 2,6

⁷ Gc 5,22

⁸ Lc 23,34

glorified his Father in himself: "God will also be glorified in him." Thus, love is always alive and ever-changing. If we keep the commandments of God, we will also be glorified by God as He promised; at the same time, he himself is glorified through us. It is also to make people know God, and this is also the mission of each of us.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in the life of the civilized age, people should use civilization to help each other understand, support, and love each other more, but in reality, people use civilization to destroy each other. So today's Gospel invites each of us to recognize each other in the eyes of true love. To get a loving gaze, one needs to imitate the love of Jesus. If and only if the man can do it.

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Biodata

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Morality: The matters of artificial insemination

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Abstract

Infertility is one of the big problems in today's world. This is also one of the causes of division and broken families. As Christians, we are called to live and bear witness to the Gospel in today's life. At the same time, know how to accompany families in this situation so that they can find the best means (approved by the Church) that can bring joy and peace to those families.

Keywords: Infertility, insemination, family, moral

Introduction

We live in a civilized and progressive world. The development of science and technology seems to be able to solve all the problems of life. One of the problems facing families today is the issue of childlessness. This problem partly affects the happy life of the family. Science has solved many cases for such families when giving birth to children through artificial insemination. However, from the position and point of view of the Catholic Church, is it acceptable to conceive in this way?

Artificial insemination (or insemination) is a technique of creating embryos by combining a man's sperm with a woman's egg, not through intercourse, but through modern technical means¹. Artificial insemination can be divided into two methods: the first is insemination in the female body by injecting sperm into the uterus. Second, fertilization occurs outside the woman's body and then transfers the embryo into the uterus. Artificial insemination can be homozygous or heterosexual. Homozygous artificial insemination is the use of gametes from a couple. Heterosexual artificial insemination is the use of gametes from a third person other than the couple. In both methods, men's semen is often obtained by masturbation, which is contrary to Christian morality. In order to have enough eggs for the second experiment, the woman must undergo an ovulatory process. She must take fertility drugs to produce a large number of eggs, which often causes many side effects. Then sperm and eggs are combined in a lab dish to create an embryo. Due to high failure rates and to reduce costs, specialists often produce more embryos than are needed for implantation in a woman's uterus. One of them will be implanted in a woman. For the rest, embryos that

¹ Phêrô Trần Quốc Dũng, *Đạo Đức Sinh Học – Tập 2A*, Nxb. Phương Đông, p.56

are not implanted – extra fetuses – are either discarded, frozen, donated to others, or for research.

From a moral point of view

Perhaps the description above explains why the Catholic Church does not accept these measures. Because in these processes, the child is created outside the act of conjugal life. The baby can therefore be seen as a product of modern technology rather than a gift from a husband and wife union.

Indeed the source of life is God, and He has authority over life. The Bible recounts that Jesus said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."*² and raised the only son of the dead widow of Nain and Lazarus to life³. The Bible also says that man is created in the image of God⁴ and is called to participate in the divine life of the Trinity⁵. The image of God is inscribed in each person, and man is called to become *"children of God."*⁶ through the Incarnate Word. Man must manifest the image of God in himself and in his life. Precisely because of such great human dignity, the circumstances of birth must also be appropriate, namely marriage and the family: *"The source of human life must be in its true context, marriage. And the family, in which it is born through an act of mutual expression of love between man and woman."*⁷.

From a moral point of view, the beginning of a new life takes place solely through marital intercourse. Therefore, in the act of husband and wife, husband and wife do not *"make"* a baby, but they give love to each other through the act of giving each other's bodies and opening them to the gift of human life. The child born through the conjugal act is a gift of God. *"The birth of a person must be the fruit of the parents' reciprocal giving and is expressed in the conjugal act. In that act, man and woman cooperate with the Creator's work, as servants and not as masters."*⁸. Giving birth and raising children to their full maturity is a heavy responsibility, so *"the child has the right to be conceived, to be conceived in the womb, to be born and to be brought up in marriage: precisely through the relationship guaranteed and acknowledged relationship with his or her parents so that the child can discover his own identity and reach his authentic human development."*⁹. With the foundation of the Bible and the Teachings of the

² John 14,6 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/14>)

³ Luke 7,11-17, John 11, 1-45 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible>)

⁴ Genesis 1, 26 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/1>)

⁵ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Dignitas Personae*, n. 8 (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)

⁶ John 1, 12 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/1>)

⁷ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Dignitas Personae*, n. 6, (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)

⁸ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Donum Vitae*, n. 6, (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html)

⁹ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Donum Vitae*, n. 6, (https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html)

Church, children cannot be viewed as “*products*” of their parents, “*made*” or “*produced*” by parents or scientists.

It is perfectly legitimate for infertile couples to seek treatment in order to have children. Because the desire to have children is natural, and children are the fruit of marriage. However, it is not correct to assume that the couple has a right over the issue of children. But instead, they are called to participate in the work of creating new life and to assume the responsibility of developing it.¹⁰ as a precious gift.

Faced with this problem, the Church understands and sympathizes with the pain of infertile families. The Church's disapproval of artificial inseminations is not that the Church does not care enough about people with their earthly needs for love and happiness, but that the Church loves and cherishes people and tries her best. Upholds the dignity of the human person and wishes him or her true happiness from an eschatological perspective.

However, the Church is not entirely opposed to any of these measures because they are man-made. Indeed, the Church approves of artificial means to assist couples in achieving conception directly from the conjugal act. It is morally appropriate to use artificial methods to restore fertility. Sometimes a husband or wife has a physical disability that can be corrected. For example, many surgeries or treatments can help men produce more sperm or correct their defects. Women may have surgery or medication to clear the lining of the uterus or ovarian cysts. Women can take fertility drugs that are similar to the hormones that help them get pregnant. In restoring health, such methods can help couples conceive through conjugal behavior. This is an artificial aid, not a natural substitute.

If couples are infertile after having successfully treated infertility by legitimate means, then accept the human condition with insurmountable limits. At that time, husband and wife are called to accept the cross with Jesus to offer sacrifices to the Father. Husband and wife try to overcome their own pain, open their hearts to orphaned and homeless children and welcome them into the loving home of their family. Husband and wife can also participate in activities, and volunteer work in the community, in the parish to find joy through serving others. In the parish I serve, there is a very young couple who have no children. Every day, they work together to make a living. They also schedule a time to participate in parish activities together. In their spare time, they go out together and visit friends. It is when working together that they feel supported and overcome difficulties and challenges in life. Encana admonished his wife, Anna, as she wept and refused to eat or drink because she couldn't have children: “*Anna, why are you crying? Why won't you eat? Aren't you more than ten sons to me?*”¹¹. With real love, suffering will make two people stick together and need each other more.

In parish ministry, the first task rests with the parish priest. During the Matrimonial Catechism course or on an opportune occasion, the parish priest should address this

¹⁰ Genesis 1, 28 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/1>)

¹¹ 1 Sm 1, 8 (<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1samuel/1>)

issue to the young people and the laity. Provide them not only with knowledge about artificial insemination but also let them know the position of the Church on the issue. From there, it helps them prepare mentally so that if the incident happens, they will not be too "shocked". However, this is a very difficult problem because human nature is weak. Although there are pieces of advice, encouragement, and explanations, it is only the insiders that we feel the pain. Theoretically, it is easy and ideal, but when faced with personal experience, we understand the pain of infertile couples. If not, it is the cross that God sent to them. We can only pray and beg for God's mercy on those people. Let God's love change their thoughts, helping them to relieve the pain of having to face the problem of children every day.

Conclusion

Infertility is one of the big problems in today's world. This is also one of the causes of division and broken families. As Christians, we are called to live and bear witness to the Gospel in today's life. At the same time, know how to accompany families in this situation so that they can find the best means (approved by the Church) that can bring joy and peace to those families.

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Biodata

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The disciple is the salt and the light of the world

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Abstract

The text defines the nature and mission of a disciple of Jesus. In it, the disciple is likened to salt to make life saltier and a light to shine into the darkness of this world. When he understands his role and responsibility, the disciple will be more confident in his life of faith and his life of witness to everyone. From there, the mission entrusted by Jesus will be powerfully realized in the life of Christians in this day and age.

Keywords: Sermon, salt, light, parable

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Text¹: Mt 5, 13-16

Background

The evangelist Matthew arranged what Jesus taught (Mt 5:3-7, 27) into the Sermon inaugurating the Kingdom of Heaven, also known as the Sermon on the Mount. In it, the verses of the Gospel passage of Mt 5, 13 - 16 are in the section about the spirit of living the faith of the citizens of the Kingdom (Mt 5, 3 - 48)². This passage of the Gospel follows Jesus' discourse on the Beatitudes to his disciples (Mt 5:1-12). It immediately follows this passage about Jesus' fulfillment of the Mosaic law and new righteousness (Mt 5:1-12). Mt 5:17 - 37). The text of Mt 5, 13 - 15 is an expression of the Matthew formula found in the Synoptic tradition (Mk 9, 49-50 and Lk 14:34-35 when it comes to salt; Mk 4:21). And Lk

¹ *The New American Bible*, Revised Edition, Catholic Book Publishing Corp., N.J., 2011.

² Vũ Phan Long OFM, *Các bài Tin Mừng Mát-thêu dùng trong Phụng vụ*, Nxb Tôn Giáo, Hà Nội, 2007, 107.

8:16 when it comes to light)³. The passage of Matthew 5, 13 – 16 begins with Jesus' teaching about the mission and vocation of the disciples in this world: to be salt and light for the world. Concluding the passage, Jesus invites his disciples to live as witnesses so that everyone may know and glorify God the Father who is in heaven.

Paragraph layout

Part one: Parables: "salt" and parables of salt (Mt 5:13).

Part two: The "light" metaphor and the lamp parable (Mt 5, 14-15).

Conclusion: The witness of the disciple is to glorify God the Father (Mt 5:16).

Summary

The text defines the nature and mission of a disciple of Jesus. In it, the disciple is likened to salt to make life saltier and a light to shine into the darkness of this world. When he understands his role and responsibility, the disciple will be more confident in his life of faith and his life of witness to everyone. From there, the mission entrusted by Jesus will be powerfully realized in the life of Christians in this day and age.

Analysis and Annotation

"Brothers": This word appears five times in the text. So who is Jesus talking about here by the phrase "brothers"? Perhaps it is easy to see that Jesus is talking about the disciples. He meant that the disciples, who were chosen, were to be the ones to transform and reform this world.⁴ At the same time, the "brothers" here are all those who believe in Jesus, especially in relation to the Sermon on the Beatitudes at Mt 5:1-12, "brothers" are anyone who tries to live one of the Eight Beatitudes. We can also call them disciples because they lived according to the beatitudes outlined by Jesus.

"Salt": People immediately think of the salty taste when talking about salt. It is something indispensable in life. It is because of the salty taste that salt has the following uses: making food taste better (G 6, 6); used to preserve food, and preventing or retarding decay (Br 6:27)⁵, so salt refers to the enduring character of a "salt covenant," that is, an eternal covenant (Num 18, 9; Lv 2, 13; 2 Sbn 13, 5); used to make the soil fertile, mixed with the fertilizer of course (Lk 14:35); and salt is also used to treat diseases: applied to tendons, sprains; Antiseptic salt, to help digestion, to store and transmit Iodine, to prevent disease... The reason why salt has so many uses, as above, is that it is salty. If salt loses its "salty" taste, that is, it loses its essence, use, and purpose, then it becomes useless.

"Light": When people speak of light, people immediately think of life. "Life is light" (John 1:3). We can affirm: If there is no light, there is no life. Since there is no light, there will be

³ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *The Gospel of Matthew*, USA, 1991, 83.

⁴ Vũ Phan Long OFM, *Các bài Tin Mừng Mát-thêu dùng trong Phụng vụ*, Nxb Tôn Giáo, Hà Nội, 2007, 107.

⁵ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *The Gospel of Matthew*, USA, 1991, 80.

no photosynthesis of chlorophyll in plants, so there cannot be any biological or human life. Light is used as a symbol in the Bible. The prophet Isaiah likened the proclaimed Servant of Yahweh to "the light of the nations" (Is 49, 6); Israel must also be a light to the Gentiles (Is 42:6)⁶. The New Testament affirmed that Jesus is "the light of the world" (Lk 2:32; Jn 8, 12; 12, 35). And following his example, the disciples were to become the light of humanity (Eph 5:8-14)⁷.

"City built on the mountain": If this is mentioned in Is 2, 2-5, it refers to Jerusalem built on Mount Zion. Perhaps Jesus was referring to the holy city of Jerusalem, which is located on a mountain and can be seen from a great distance.⁸ Citadel here also means that the Church is built on the faith life of the Apostles to proclaim the Good News to everyone⁹. And the city can also be the very faith of the disciples of Jesus so that through his life of witness, the disciple spreads to everyone to be known to God.

"Light up": The lamp only illuminates when it is lit; otherwise, it is still lying alone in the corner of the house. The lamp is only lit when there is darkness, to shine a light for everyone to see everything. Jesus wants his disciples to "light up the lamp" of their faith through their own lives, to dispel the darkness of fear and sin, and to bear witness to their faith life. Do not "light the lamp" and then "put it under the bucket", but must "put it on the base" so that the light of the lamp of faith is "shining for everyone in the house", that is, for the whole world¹⁰.

"Let your light shine": Here refers to the purpose and life of the disciple. The disciple received light from Jesus, and now they radiate that light to everyone. The disciple cannot hide the light of faith to himself, nor can he live contrary to the values of the Gospel. The disciple must share the light with others.

"Glorify your Father": A very meaningful conclusion, it says, the One that everyone must turn to, to honor, is "your Father", who is in heaven. This expression is a prominent feature in Matthew, and it is also found only once in Mark and Luke¹¹. This is the first time in the Gospel of Matthew that Jesus talks about the Father. He even emphasizes that it is "your Father". This revelation also helps us to know that God is Triune.

Theological reflection

First of all, the disciple himself must have a quality, and it is like salt with a salty taste. The taste of salt is what lies most deeply in the grain of salt, and it belongs to the grain of salt. That quality of a disciple must have is cohesion. To have Jesus in them must be their nature. Second, the disciple lives in the world to transform it, to give it flavor, so as not to be

⁶ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *The Gospel of Matthew*, USA, 1991, 80.

⁷ Hoàng Đắc Ánh OP, *Tin Mừng theo thánh Mát-thêu*, Sài Gòn, 1997, 79.

⁸ Daniel J. Harrington SJ, *The Gospel of Matthew*, USA, 1991, 80.

⁹ Etienne Charpentier (Mai Văn Hùng OP chuyên dịch), *Đọc Tin Mừng Theo Thánh Mát-thêu*, 1993, 62.

¹⁰ Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – New Testament Ia*, Illinois, USA, 2001, 94

¹¹ W.F.Albright and C.S.Mann, *The Anchor Bible Matthew*, New York, 1986, 56.

spoiled by the many attacks of Satan, the world, and the flesh. In other words, the disciple must live witness in the midst of this life in order to make the world better, better forever (Mt 5:13)¹². At the same time, salt is not a pearl, a bar of silver that must be stored or given to make a profit, but a spice. It takes effect when it accepts "self-destruct", dissolving into food. The Christian is the salt of the world because he is not called to a life of isolation, away from others, but because he knows how to dissolve himself into the great human family to support anyone who needs¹³.

Jesus also wants the disciple to shine his light. So what to shine? It is the shining of Jesus himself for humanity to know Him and to know God the Father. The disciple must shine Him for this world so that He can enter every human heart. Wherever He is, there is divine life¹⁴. That is the nature of light for the world. The two images "the city built on the mountain" and the "lamp for all in the house" (Mt 5, 14-15) can also be applied to individual disciples. By vocation, the disciple must share the light with others. They must not lack light, and even less irresponsibly because they cannot make a good influence in the community. This light is not the light of words, nor the light of theoretical truth, but the light of "good works", as Jesus mentioned (Mt 4:23-25) and did (Mt 5:3-11) and will still mention (Mt 7:23; 25, 31-46) in his discourses.

When a disciple has lived the true nature of being a disciple of Jesus: "salt" and "light" for the world, then they have also become witnesses of God's love for man. At the same time, the disciple's good conduct through his life, conduct, and love of concern for everyone is intended to "glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:16), rather than looking for praise for themselves. Only when a disciple knows how to commit himself with a self-sacrificing love of service like Jesus will the human race realize that God is the disciple's loving and benevolent Father. Only kindness, kindness, love, and service spirit can become light for others.

In today's life, with the challenges facing the Church, especially for the faithful, the Lord's disciples, it is necessary to know how to live witness with steadfast faith, love, and compassion. When people learn to forgive, they are creating a peaceful and happy life for the world. More than anyone else, the faithful disciples of Jesus, the clergy and religious, must bear witness in the midst of today's world. In the face of injustices, sufferings, and wounds that people today are struggling with, struggling in pain, consecrated people must be "salt" to ease the pain and make their lives less painful, less humiliating, and help them live with dignity as children of God. Not only that, through lifestyle, through gratuitous love and service, through the very choices to side with the weak and abandoned people of the society is also the way to shine the light on those consecrated to this world. And most of all, with the strength of unwavering faith in God, consecrated persons come to meet to lift up lives engulfed in the darkness of sin, to help them walk in the light and love of God.

¹² Hoàng Đắc Ánh OP, *Tin Mừng theo thánh Mát-thêu*, Sài Gòn, 2004, 100.

¹³ Vũ Phan Long OFM, *Các bài Tin Mừng Mát-thêu dùng trong Phụng vụ*, Nxb Tôn Giáo, Hà Nội, 2007, 112.

¹⁴ Manlio Simonetti, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – New Testament Ia*, Illinois, USA, 2001, 93

Through all of that, Jesus wants to continue the call not only to the disciples of old but to each one of us today.

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The model of Mary's faith in the Wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1-12)


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Abstract

Faith is essential for Christians on the journey of grace to follow God and reach out to others. In flourishing their faith, they can find precious help from Mary's example of faith in the wedding at Cana, which is full of humility and positively waiting for God's will.

Keywords: Mary's faith, The wedding of Cana, God's will

Introduction

Faith plays an important role in human life in such a way that it is not only necessary for salvation but also brings great things to those who open their hearts to receive and respond to God's gifts. Jesus once told his disciples: "if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible to you" (Mt 17:20). However, how to keep the faith alive and make God's gift of faith flourish in the complex and volatile daily life is not an easy and smooth thing. In that situation, the model of Mary's faith in the wedding at Cana, which will be presented in this writing, must be of great help to everyone.

The Wedding of Cana

The Fourth Gospel's account at the beginning of chapter 2 presents us with an idyllic scene at the wedding of Cana. Mary is invited to the wedding feast, and her presence entails Jesus and His disciples. The great joy of the newlyweds goes down because an unexpected incident of running out of alcohol happens. This confuses the headwaiter because the wedding party is in danger of losing its fun. Mary, with a delicate female sensibility, does not want this unexpected situation to happen. Her great faith saves the newlyweds and keeps their joy well with them. How does Mary set an example for us to believe in God?

The first thing that must be mentioned about Mary's model of faith is humility. This feature manifests itself in three specific dimensions: she enters the dialogue with Jesus, is simple in prayer, and always keeps a humble attitude as God's handmaid. Mary says to Jesus: "They have no wine" (Jn 2:3). First of all, Mary's faith has a dialogue dimension in a relationship with God. A self-satisfied person concentrating everything on himself as the button of the universe will not need to care about anyone else, nor a personal

relationship in which real conversations will blossom. This is not to Mary, who enters into the dialogue with Jesus in faith and prays for others' needs and interests. Other speaking, her humble faith wears on a dimension of dialogue with God. Moreover, her humble faith is shown by just-it-be words from her heart. She is not meaningless with sparkling repetition in prayer because that attitude is of those who wrongly think that it is the forced way for God's acceptance. She offers the plea with simple true words of prayer to express her needs because she is convinced that God "knows what you need before you ask Him." (Mt 6:7), and God is more interested in the loyal human heart than in sacrifice (Hs 6:6). Mary sets us an example way of humble prayer in faith. In addition, her humility of faith always keeps her in the right relationship with God. People who petition so eagerly will be in the dangerous temptation of self-pride that God must follow according to their will. Mary does not consider her fervent faith a condition for forcing God, who was completely free to respond to her request. Mary's faith contains the profound humility of her saying "yes" as a humble handmaid to the will of God even from the moment of the angel's annunciation (Lk 1:38). Thus, Mary sets an example for us of a humble faith that is open to the dialogue with God, is simple in prayer, and humble as God's handmaid. Now we wonder what Mary's faith would be like when Jesus seemed to refuse her request: "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4).

This leads to the second part of Mary's model of faith: she patiently and actively waits for God's will. This is shown through three aspects: accepting the darkness of reason, doing everything in her ability from her position, and leading people to God. Indeed, the word "woman" in Jesus' calling creates a new strange relationship between Him and Mary (Keck et al., 1994), and the concept of "hour" in Jesus' answer is controversial to exegetes to understand what Jesus means to delay it (Moloney, 1998) (Nichols, 2015). For Mary, she does not ask her faith to make God's Word clear immediately, but she believes that Jesus had his way and time in doing this. It is her faith that illuminates the darkness of the mind in the light of hope. The next aspect of her faith does everything according to her capability and position. While waiting for God's will to be done, she arranges servants to be ready to watch and wait for Jesus to reveal the glory of His intended hour: "Whatever he says to you, do it" (Jn 2:5). At this point, Judith A. Bauer agrees that Mary's intervention teaches us a lesson in perseverance (Bauer, 2004). However, the patience of waiting in her faith is more of this: It has an entirely positive dimension. In addition, her faith leads others to God. Mary instructs the servants to turn to Jesus, listen attentively to him, and do what he commands. She creates the starting point for a newly oriented faith journey in that the servants would walk to Jesus, witness with their own eyes the glory of the sign Jesus performed at the wedding of Cana, and ultimately believe in him. Thus, her faith guides others to believe in God. In general, in all three aspects above, such as accepting the darkness of reason, fulfilling one's duty wholeheartedly from one's own position, and leading others to God, Mary shows us the patience to wait positively in her faith in God.

Conclusion

In short, the wedding feast at Cana is not only an important event for the newlyweds but all believers. Through this account, Mary's faith model teaches us to be humble and actively wait for God's will. Following her faith, all Christians can experience the same joy she lived and become disciples of Jesus, spreading the humble and patient faith to the surroundings.

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A hand touch: God's grace and human response

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Abstract

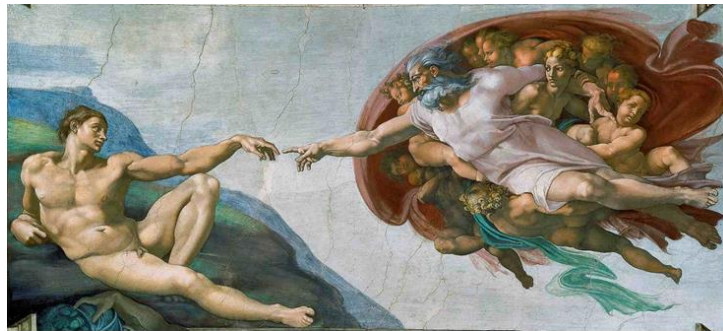
Faith is God's gift to man but needs human cooperation. Therefore, Faith is the intersection between God's gift and human response.

Đức Tin là ân ban của Thiên Chúa cho con người, nhưng cần con người cộng tác. Vì thế, Đức Tin là điểm giao nhau giữa ân ban của Thiên Chúa và hành động đáp trả của con người.

Keywords: touch, God's love, servant

Introduction

Those who have been fortunate enough to once look back at the dome of the Sistine church will surely be amazed at the magnificence of the giant painting on the dome, made by the genius sculptor and painter Michelangelo. Nine different paintings link this huge fresco, and the picture of God



flying to touch Adam's hand is the most noticed and is also the center of the fresco. This is a unique and meaningful picture depicting a "touch of the hand." God plays an active role in reaching out to people with all his love. Meanwhile, Adam responded with a tired and passive attitude with his wrists lowered, showing the weak and fickle human condition. This "touch of the hand" is also used by many authors to refer to faith in people. God always takes the first step; he reaches out his hand to wait for the free response of man. And when people respond, the "touch" describes the formation of faith. Therefore, when talking about the Christian faith, the Church has made the following statement: "Faith is a gift of God and a human act."¹.

¹ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 179,180.

Fides quae creditur

First, to believe is to accept what God has revealed.² Everything seems so simple, and now we just need to accept Revelation. But it is not easy to accept Revelation because it is beyond our understanding, for there is an infinite, impossible distance between God and us. Therefore, in order to have faith, to accept Revelation, we must have the gift of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide us³. He will move and turn our hearts to God, igniting in us the desire to overcome hesitations and avoidances⁴. Saint Augustine likens that gift to divine illumination, and St. Thomas Aquinas speaks of an inner impulse. Theologian Karl Rahner speaks of the divine being⁵. It is by the grace of God that man's weaknesses are healed, and at the same time, his capacity is enhanced to be able to receive Revelation. When a man has received Revelation, God does not let the man do it in his own strength, but he gives us the necessary graces to help us deepen the meaning of truth and contemplate God, that is, understanding, argumentative and intelligent.⁶

Moreover, the primary purpose of God's self-manifestation is not to force our intellect to accept or obey but to enable man to enter into a personal relationship with God. God is the one who took the first step. He is a mighty One, but he has spoken to mankind as a friend. Throughout human history, God has revealed Himself to the first human ancestors, then to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, and on the last day, God has spoken to us through His own son, Jesus Christ.⁷ To save and bring people back to God, Jesus came to earth as a human, was born in a poor cave, and lived a human life like us. This is an unbelievable event. If a head of state wields a hoe and plow like a farmer, we have rarely seen it. Here again is a great God, Lord above lords, king over kings. He did not come down to earth to survey, to taste the taste of the world, but he lived as a real person. All for the love of humanity, to make it easier for mankind to come to him. Moreover, with his death and resurrection, Jesus restored the intimate bond between God and man, allowing the man to "touch the hand" of God. With the Paschal Mystery, Jesus gave his divine life to us through the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, by which our faith is nourished. Even so, many times, we still feel that there are "dark nights of faith", something that even saints have experienced, such as Saint Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. It is these challenges as gifts from God to increase each person's faith⁸.

"I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth, I will make your faithfulness known through all generations."⁹ Grace is always there, but accepting it or not is human freedom. Pope Benedict commented that human life is always a struggle between

² Cf. PHAN TAN THANH, "*Thần Học Mặc Khải*", Dominican Academy, 2011, p.249.

³ JOHN PAUL II, *Faith, and Reason*, 9.

⁴ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum*, 5.

⁵ Cf. THOMAS P. RAUSCH, *Introduction to Theology*, OJ, 2002, p.142.

⁶ Cf. PHAN TAN THANH, "*Đời Sống Tâm Linh XI: Thần Học Đức Tin*", Dominican Academy, 2013, p.231.

⁷ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Dei Verbum*, 2-4.

⁸ Cf. TADEUSZ DANCER, "*Hồng Ân Đức Tin*", translated by Pham Quoc Huyen, Hanoi, Religious Press, 2012, p.100.

⁹ Psalm 89,1.

doubt and belief, always putting us in a fundamental choice that we cannot refuse: to believe or not to believe in God¹⁰. This is a response of the human self, not a response of one aspect, but a response of the whole person, a human act. Through the ages, the human mind has always had a germ of aspiration towards God, which is expressed through philosophical and religious reflections. Man has tried his best but still cannot find his way to the destination, for he is created with eyes that can only see what is not God. Knowing that God acted first, he revealed to the man himself supernatural and profound truths. These truths are most clearly expressed through Scripture and Tradition. We know that most of the knowledge that people gain is left behind by previous generations or, in other words, by trust.¹¹ This is even more necessary for things related to the transcendental world, the world that humans do not know and cannot touch. To have faith, reason must be open to and accept the absolute. In conforming to what is contained in Revelation, human reason is neither destroyed nor humiliated, for this conformity is always made by reason by a free and conscious choice.¹² With that choice, reason can delve into Revelation, learning its content, meaning, and origin. Reason plays a very important role in the act of believing but cannot construct the content of faith. It tries to find reasons for convincing faith both objectively and subjectively, tries to clarify the theoretical foundations of the faith, and understand the mysteries of Revelation. God's Revelation is boundless, and human reason is finite, so human reason sometimes has to stop before the truths of Revelation. At this point, we see a struggle in people, including those who have faith: man cannot know about God, so God has given Revelation to man, but when receiving Revelation, reason Man's mind continues to struggle with incomprehensible mysteries, man cannot find clear proofs. This forces people to continue to choose: to believe or not to believe. Is this the will of God: He respects human freedom? Let's imagine what the scenario would be like if God were a truism before our eyes. Who among us dare not believe and disobey God? So, is our faith really free or just a secret compulsion? Therefore, when reason is powerless before the mysteries, man is given perfect freedom: to commit or to retreat from the faith. At this point, we need to have an adventurous jump, need to be reckless, and dare to consider what we can't see to be true. Philosopher Kierkegaard once said, "I fully believe, although I cannot fully understand."¹³

"Love returns love; kindness returns kindness". So, faith is not only accepting Revelation but also man's response to God's call and loving gaze. God's love for man is so high and great, an infinite love. How can we be indifferent to that love? Run to God, say to God: "I love you very much". Use our small love to respond to God's immense love. It is when we love God that we believe in Him. How can we love someone if we don't trust that person? And it is that faith-love that will transform our lives, help us turn inward, and make a conversion. From the inner transformation, faith will impel us to change our lives, help

¹⁰ Cf. JOSEPH RATZINGER, "*Đức Tin Kitô Giáo Hôm Qua và Hôm Nay*", translated by Nguyen Quoc Lam, Pham Hong Lam, Hanoi, Religious Press, 2009, p.71.

¹¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Faith and Reason*, 31.

¹² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Faith and Reason*, 41-43.

¹³ TRAN QUANG THUAN, "*Hành Trình Tâm Linh*", Ho Chi Minh, Phuong Dong Publishing House, 2012, p.330.

us to do God's will in all things, to accept to crucify our own will to obey God's will: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."¹⁴.

In addition, faith is a constant response and dialogue between man and God. It is not enough to be baptized, to receive the faith. That faith must also be maintained in the midst of the storms of life. It is a constant battle with one's own desires, a struggle between existential choices in life. Faith needs to be made stronger through the feast of the Word, the Eucharist, and the Sacraments. In addition, we also need to be mindful of the community and missionary aspects of the faith.¹⁵ God gives the gift of faith to all mankind, so the individual's faith is placed in relation to the community. Christians, let's help each other promote the faith life and bring that faith to everyone.

On the whole, faith is the meeting point between God's gift and human response. Being aware of that, how should we live? How can we receive grace when we cannot feel it? It is important, first of all, to open your heart to taste the immense love and grace of God. Open your senses to feel the world. Open your eyes to admire the beauty of the universe and listen to the sounds of life, all these things let you know that you are alive, and that is a great gift that God has given you. God has also revealed himself to us, giving us the gift of faith so that we can gain eternal life. Once we have felt God's grace, what should we do next? God's grace is great, but if we don't accept it, it's useless. So, we must open our hearts to God's grace and cooperate with His grace. Let God guide us, enlighten us, and at the same time, let us strive to learn the Scriptures, the Sacred Traditions, to attend Mass and the Sacraments, to gain a better understanding of Revelation and Faith. And most of all, we must have a prayer life and enter into an intimate relationship with God. Mother Teresa said: "The fruit of faith is prayer, and the fruit of prayer is faith." Our life should be a life of constant prayer, a constant dialogue with God. Give God all the joys and sorrows in life. It is these things that will help our faith become stronger and stronger.

In particular, faith also needs to be expressed through action. Saint James said: "*Faith without works is dead.*"¹⁶. People of faith must live what they believe and must demonstrate their faith through concrete words and deeds. Living the faith also means participating in and sharing in the common aspiration for peace and fraternity, striving to build the perfect social structure to prepare new humanity. The Second Vatican Council further emphasized that Christians must concretize their life of faith: "For the Christian, neglect of earthly duties is the neglect of duty towards one's neighbor, and more to God himself, putting his salvation at stake."¹⁷.

¹⁴ Gal 2:20.

¹⁵ Cf. PHAN TAN THANH, "Đời Sống Tâm Linh XI: Thần Học Đức Tin", Dominican Academy, 2013, p.232.

¹⁶ Jame 2:17.

¹⁷ Gaudium et Spes, 43.

Conclusion

In short, God always loves and wants people to come to God to be happy. God humbled himself to reveal to man: Who is He? And God also gives people the gift of faith and acts on people's hearts so that people turn to God. But God does not force a man to believe in Him but leaves man free to respond. So will we choose to believe in God or reject His love? We should follow the example of Mary. With her yes: "I am the Lord's servant, may your word to me be fulfilled."¹⁸, Mary touched God's hand and accepted God into her life, even though her mind could not comprehend it. Her whole life was the constant response of faith, the response of the whole person. Let us follow her example, receive the gift of Faith from God, let's make a "touch" with Him. Then our lives will be transformed, and we will feel joy and will taste the peace and happiness of the heavenly kingdom right here on earth.

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¹⁸ Luke 1:38.

The Fears in our Life

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Abstract

To the human eye, this world is very beautiful, but it is also insecure and full of disasters, wars, and diseases. As a consequence, we are living with fears. This writing investigates three kinds of fears and how we can overcome each fear. To answer the research question, I base the writing on the teaching of the Gospel and the Catholic doctrine. In the end, the writing shows that we can overcome our fears if we put our life in God's hands and keep His commandments. I suggest you use this writing to reflect and strengthen your faith in God.

Keywords: fear, neighbor, nature, God

Introduction

Fear is something that belongs to instinct. Animals are afraid of life-threatening dangers. Their first instinct is to run away. People have the same instinct as animals when they are facing those dangers. Their first instinct is to hide or to run away. When they have to face those dangers or when we have no place to hide, we have to try our best to struggle against those dangers to survive. Even those, the fear is in their mind. Catholics can recognize what is scary and what is not scary in their lives. Therefore, they have the instinct to be afraid of "the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."¹

Fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature. The Bible recounts that God gave Adam and Eva dominion over all species. They live in peace and happiness. Fear only appeared when they ate the forbidden fruit. From this event, three kinds of fear appeared. First, Adam feared God and avoided facing God. Second, Adam feared Eve and wanted to cover his shortcomings to protect himself from being usurped by Eva. Third, Adam and Eva feared nature. In short, fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature.

¹ Craig Alan Evans, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Matthew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226.

Kinds of fears

The first fear is from God, who is the source of holiness.² Even though many atheists or even many Catholics have forgotten or ignored this fear because they think that God will not punish them or they are far from being punished, this fear exists in reality. Those who commit sins will fear God and his punishments because they feel the state of being different from his holiness and being disgraced to God. God's holiness is perfection that they can not achieve, so they feel they are far from God and his protection. Moreover, it is quite difficult to keep God's commandments, so they fear God when they break his law. This fear is something holy, related to the conscience of people. Strange to say, Catholics do not have to fear God because God is love, so he will not abandon us. In addition, He created us according to his perfect image, so he will not destroy us but leads us to our happy destiny. To overcome this fear, we must always prepare for our death so that when Lord comes unexpectedly, we do not have to be confused by our unworthiness. There is a truth: whichever side a tree leans on, when it dies, it will lean to that side. In the same way, if we are inclined to evil when we are alive, then when we die, we are also inclined to evil. If we are inclined to God when we are alive, then we are also inclined to God when we die. If we can do this, we will be sanctified and share God's glory.

The second fear is from our neighbors.³ Neighbours mean human beings in general. Human beings were created not only with the precious dignity that can not be deprived but also with pride and cupid. Unfortunately, pride and the cupid cause fear in our society. We fear other nations because they can dominate our country. We fear our neighbors because they can affect our life and our benefit. We fear our parents because they can limit our freedom. In history, we have witnessed many sad events: wars, slave possession, trafficking, robbery, and kidnapping. Those are the consequence of human pride and cupid. Luckily, we can also overcome that fear if we keep the commandment of love. When we love our neighbors, we will receive their love in return. Mankind will live in peace and prosperity as a consequence of love.

The third fear comes from the dangers of nature. When God created the universe, He set a natural law in the universe. According to this law, fire is hot, ice is cold, and lions eat pigs. As a result, there are Forest fires, floods, and earthquakes. Many disasters happening in the world make us scared. Once again, we can also overcome the fear of nature because we know that God always protects and preserves all species that he

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 206.

³ Jen DuBos, "Identifying the Three Fundamental Fears: Death, Abandonment and Failure," *Stenzel Clinical Services* (2019), 2. <https://stenzelclinical.com/identifying-the-three-fundamental-fears-death-abandonment-and-failure/>

created. Moreover, he directs all species to their destiny. We call this process Divine Providence.⁴ We just need to trust him and cooperate with him.

On the other hand, many people had overcome fear even when they faced the fear of death. They know their life is the greatest thing in this world, but they willingly give up their lives for a higher value – the kingdom of God. The reason is quite simple: they know that another life is more important than this life. They knew this in the light of the night of the Garden of Olives. Jesus himself, in his nature, was afraid of death, but he did not let fear overcome him. But he dares to say yes to Father's will. He overcame the fear because he knew that Father would raise him and would bring salvation from his death to mankind. The martyrs, too, dared to lay down their lives, to bear witness to their pure faith. For them, living the catholic faith is more important than their lives.

Conclusion

In summary, I think fear comes from three factors: God, neighbors, and nature. Three kinds of fear exist at the same time in our life. My friend, are you afraid of something? Is it sickness, hunger, accident, or death? They are dangerous, but those things "cannot kill the soul."⁵ It is the selfish life, following passions and lusts that are scary things. They are things that we have to fear. But we have divine hope in God, who will help us overcome our fear. Let's trust in God and courageously live as witnesses to the Gospel and also courageously refuse all temptations to sin. We offer God our lives and the fear of mankind in the Covid epidemic, and we trust in God's Providence. May God have mercy on us and save us.

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⁴ Phan Tấn Thành, "Chúa Quan Phòng Là Gì?", *Tinh Dòng Đa Minh Việt Nam* (September 2015), 2. <http://daminhvn.net/hieu-de-song-duc-tin/chua-quan-phong-la-gi-3322.html>.

⁵ Craig Alan Evans, *New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Matthew* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 226.

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Love Your Enemies


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Abstract

“Love your enemies” is the commandment of Jesus. But to “love your enemies” is never easy. In this article, I would like to share 3 ideas to know how to love enemies, which are: First, to love your enemies is to portray the love of God Second, to love your enemies is to forgive them. Third, to love your enemies is to pray for them.

Keywords: Love, enemy, forgive, love your enemies

Introduction

Life experience shows that we cannot hate a person and at the same time want them to be happy, nor can we pray for someone whose heart is full of hatred towards that person. So, for our enemies to be happy and peaceful, we need to love them. That is the condition for us to become children of God. But how do you love your enemies? In this article, I would like to share two ideas: to love your enemies is to forgive them and pray for them.

Actions of love

First, to love your enemies is to forgive them: because of the love of man, God wants man to live. When teaching his disciples: “*Love your enemies*”, Jesus wanted to uphold the principle: Only love and forgiveness can free people from hatred, and only love can bring life to people.

Jesus himself did it on the cross by praying for those who crucified him: “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (Lk 23,34). This prayer is the pattern of “*loving your enemies.*” In turn, the deacon Stephen, the Church's first martyr, prayed for those who stoned him: “*Lord, do not hold them accountable for this sin*” (Acts 7,60). St. Stephen's frank and merciful attitude towards those who harm him is “love of his enemies,” according to the words of Jesus. And today, we, too, have an excellent example of forgiveness that is Saint John Paul II. After he was healed from the assassination attack, he was shot in St. Peter's Square. One of the first things he did was visit the man who had assassinated him in prison and grant him pardon things and harmony.

Thus, love for the enemy must be verified by forgiving one another. Genuine forgiveness is the first duty of those who live Christian charity. This obligation has been incorporated into "Our Father." If we want our prayers for forgiveness to be sure to be accepted by God, we must also be willing to forgive one another (cf. Mt 6,12-15). Saint Paul has warned us: "*The Lord has forgiven you. You must also forgive others*" (Col 3,13; Eph 4,32). Loving the enemy is the noblest proof of the spirit of tolerance and forgiveness; It is a sign that we are being conformed to Christ.

Second, to love your enemies is to pray for them: Jesus' invitation: "Love your enemies" and "pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5,44) are closely linked, illuminating each other. It can be said that "love your enemies" is "pray for those who persecute you," and conversely, "pray for those who persecute you" is "love your enemies." Speak like A.W. Tozer: "*we can't pray in love and live in hate and still think we are worshiping God*"¹. Jesus invites his disciples to love generously to depict the mercy and forgiveness of the heavenly Father.

Indeed, prayer is a sure sign of forgiveness. So to show forgiveness to those who are our enemies, we must pray for them, wishing them well. Experience shows that when we love someone, we often remember them and pray for them, such as parents, siblings, and even ourselves. Praying for our enemies shows that we love them. This means that: Christian charity requires that we not only be at peace with our enemies but also pray for them, walk with them, love them, help them and do them favors.². The obligation to pray for those who persecute you always transcends all boundaries, all the boundaries of the art of behavior or communication.

Therefore, to love one's enemies is to love those who harm, despise, speak ill of, and slander oneself, not seeking revenge, not repaying evil with evil, but repaying favor with kindness, always praying and wishing for them to have good luck. As was the case with David, hated by King Saul, hunted to kill, but David still did not harm the God-anointed man when he could do so (cf. 1 Sam 26:7-9) In my eyes David acted foolishly, missing a "rare" opportunity, to eliminate his enemies, but David chose God, not choosing his interests but harming others.

Conclusion

In short, "loving one's enemies" is never easy, but it is a condition, a sign of whether a person is a child of God or not (Mt 5,45). And we are only true children of God when we forgive those who make mistakes and pray for them. As a Christian, each person has to bear witness to God's love in the world, not only loving our benefactors but also our enemies. The role model for Christians is Jesus. In addition, Christians are obligated to perform that act of love as Jesus himself did and commanded: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15,12).

¹x. <https://busyblessedwomen.com/how-to-love-your-enemies/>, Truy cập ngày 29/7/2022.

² x. Gerard H. Luttenberger, *Dẫn Vào Kitô Học*, tr. 212.

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Conversion to the Good News - Luke 13,1-5¹

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Abstract

In the passage from Luke's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 1-5, Jesus twice affirms: *"If you do not convert, you will all die in the same way"*. Jesus wanted the Jews to change their minds and live a converted spirit so that they would not enter the way of death. So, to better understand His teaching, we need to understand what conversion is and why He wants us to convert.

Keywords: Conversion, Luke's Gospel, spirit, death

Introduction

In the passage from Luke's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 1-5, Jesus twice affirmed: *"If you do not convert, you will all die in the same way"*. Jesus wanted the Jews to change their minds and live a converted spirit so that they would not enter the way of death. So, to better understand His teaching, we need to understand what conversion is and why God wants us to convert.

What is conversion?

First of all, what is conversion? In Latin, the word 'convertere' is a combination of the prefix con- (with, together with) and vertere (to return). Thus, conversion means turning to one's heart, admitting sins, shortcomings, inadequacies, and repenting in order to change one's heart, thoughts, and actions for the better. In Greek, the noun for conversion is 'μετάνοια' (metanoia: conversion) which includes the prefix μετά- (meta), meaning change, and the word νοια (noia), meaning the change of mind. Therefore, to

¹ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/13>. Lc 13,1-5: *"At that time some people who were present there told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate* had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them*—do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"*. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22)

convert (μετάνοέω) means to change one's mind towards what is holy, noble, and better.² Thus, according to the Greek, conversion is first a change of mind, then a change of actions and lifestyle. In other words, if we change our outward actions without changing our minds, we cannot call it conversion.

In the Old Testament, King David is a concrete example of this spirit of conversion. After committing adultery with Beth-seva and killing Uriah, God sent the prophet Nathan to warn the king about the mistakes he had committed. With an upright heart, he did not deny responsibility but humbly confessed his sins. He said to God: *"Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love; in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash away my guilt, and from my sin, cleanse me. For I know my transgressions; my sin is always before me. Against you, you alone have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your eyes."*³ He changed his attitude before he changed his behavior. Therefore, God was merciful and forgave his mistakes. Although He did punish David, God did not let him die.

And in the account of the Gospel of Luke, chapter 13, from verses 1-5, when some people came to tell the Lord (the fact) that some Galileans were killed by Pilate, or through the story of those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them, the Lord twice reminded them that *"if you do not convert, you too will perish."* The Lord told them to convert not because they did something wrong but because they had not changed their minds. It seems that they still keep the mindset that those unfortunate people died as a result of sin, and they lived better and more justly, so they did not fall into the same situation. They were framed in their limited thinking, so God warned them. The same thing happened in the Corinthian community that Paul did not hesitate to admonish: *"Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall."*⁴

Indeed, suppose anyone comes to God with pride and pride, thinking that he is completely free from sin, that he is more holy than others. In that case, no matter how he is in a great position or performs many good deeds, there is still no spirit of conversion in him, and he can easily stumble at any time. Therefore, conversion is not an outward appearance, but it must come from a change of mind and inner-thinking and then a change of outward behavior.

Second, why does God want us to convert? Yes, conversion helps us to be aware of our sinful condition so that we can quickly return to God, who is rich in mercy. Indeed, if sin leads us to follow the devil's shadow and away from God's love, the conversion will help us to turn to Him. When we know how to convert, even though *"our sins are as*

² <https://hdgmvietnam.com/chi-tiet/duc-giesu-kito-duong-keu-goi-hoan-cai-41529>. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22).

³ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/51>. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22).

⁴ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/10>. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22).

red as crimson, as deep as a crimson cloth."⁵, He will generously forgive and love us with all his heart. He does not judge us by our sins but on our sincere conversions to deal with us. He understands us and sympathizes with us. He grieves when we sin but rejoices when we sincerely convert and quickly return to His teachings.

The admonition on conversion in the Gospel of Luke chapter 13 was also repeated by Jesus in other preaching times. Specifically, in the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord warned the townspeople who refused to convert: *"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds are done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' For if the mighty deeds are done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."*⁶ Thus, for the Lord, conversion is a decisive condition for us to live or die, be lifted up to heaven or go to hell, and be rewarded or punished on the day of judgment.

As human beings, surely, everyone has sinned, and everyone is confused and weak at times, but if we remain inert in our sins and do not know how to repent, we voluntarily step into the worldly way of death. And if we know how to open our minds and sincerely convert every day, then surely, we will walk on the path of life.

Conclusion

In conclusion, through the passage from Luke chapters 13:1-5, the Lord reminds the Jews and all of us to live a penitential attitude at all times. God wants us to have the courage to change our minds, to turn to God for mercy. Each of us should not give in to our own lusts do not close ourselves to the darkness of sin, but we should be ready to let the light of God's Word shine in order to move forward in His ways. Each of us needs to turn to the Holy Spirit, who is the Advocate who will sustain and help us to continue living a positive and conscious conversion throughout our lives. As we live the spirit of conversion, we will experience God's great love, and we will certainly walk the path of life that He has promised us.

⁵ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/1>. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22).

⁶ <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/11>. (Truy cập ngày 1/8/22).

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Living The Mystery of Communion of the Trinity in The Community


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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive overview of the mystery of Trinitarian communion before highlighting its applications in the life of the religious community or in the lives of Christians, depending on the condition of life of the reader.

Keywords: Trinity, mystery, communion, consecrated love

Introduction

One day, Saint Augustine was walking on the beach. He saw a child using a seashell to scoop up seawater and pour it into a hole. He asked the child: "What are you doing"? The child replied that he wanted to scoop up all the seawater to pour into this hole. He told him, "You will never finish this project because it is too difficult". The child replied that it was easier for him to do this compared to what the Saint himself was doing: thinking about the Trinity. Indeed, the Mystery of the Trinity is a central mystery of the Catholic faith. This mystery is extremely sublime and incomprehensible to the human mind. Saint Augustine is a doctor of Theology, but he also feels difficult to meditate on this mystery. However, fortunately, Jesus revealed to us that the mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of love. This love has two characteristics.

1. The mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of communion

The Trinity is in full communion with one another. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and this outpouring of love combined with the love of the Holy Spirit makes love perfect. Jesus said these things many times in the New Testament: "My Father and I were one" (Jn 10, 30). When He prayed for the Apostles, he also said, "May they be one as Father in you and I in you" (Jn 17, 21). The Trinity is in full communion with each other in thought, word, and deed. In a special way, this love is fully realized in God's love of man and in God's salvation of man. Each Person does a different task: The Father is the creator; The Son is the redeemer; The Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies. Although the Holy Trinity performs three different tasks, they are linked together in a wonderful and holy love.

Furthermore, Saint Athanasius uses a different scheme to describe this communion: “*The Father is light, the Son is light, the Holy Spirit is through whom we are illuminated*”; because “*the Father is the fountain and the Son is called the river, and we drink the Spirit.*”¹ Thus, *each Person not only loves the other but also works for the happiness of the other Persons in an effective way in all activities of each Person. Other Persons participate. The three were never separated.*² We can use a real picture to illustrate this mystery. It's a candle. We see the candle. We see the fire, and we also feel the heat from the flame. The three are separate, but they exist in a single one. Three is one, and one is three. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are bound together. Three persons but one God.

2. The mystery of the Trinity is a mystery of consecrated love

Love has a wonderful feature. That is, the more we love each other, the more we make sacrifices for each other and forgive each other, and the more love grows: instead of wearing out, it will increase day by day, and each day this love will be more intimate. This is very different from the things that we use in life. For example, if we buy a television, a refrigerator, or a car, it will wear out or be damaged after a period of use. Also, health, money, and time also degrade with the years we live. Love is different from that. Love will become richer the more we love each other. Happiness will increase if we know how to forgive and sacrifice for each other more.

Trinitarian love is a love that is completely self-giving. The love of the Trinity for each other has never changed, and this love is getting stronger and more passionate. It never fades, and external factors change it. Jesus said to His disciples, “*If anyone loves me, they will obey me. Then my Father will love them, and we will come to them and live them*” (Jn 14, 23). “*The Father and I are one*” (Jn 10:30); “*Let all be one, as Father: You are in the Son and the Son in you. That they may also be in us*” (Jn 17:21). “*All that the Father has is mine.*” The Father gave the Son himself so that the Son is the perfect image of the Father because Jesus said: “*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*”. (Jn 14:9). The Triune God is linked together in a love that generates more and more fullness. If we give anyone our love, we will receive love from others. When we give our love, we will feel happy because God also gives his love to us generously. The love in the Trinity overflows and overflows to all beings, makes all living things, and participates in the boundless source of love for eternal happiness. This is the hope of Christian communion, which has its divine source in the Trinitarian communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.³

3. Living the mystery of Trinitarian communion in community life

The mystery of the communion of the Trinity is a mystery of communion in its entirety. Can we fully live the mystery of Trinitarian communion in our community? Father Dan

¹ Jos Dong Dang lived in communion according to the example of the Trinity, (<http://www.Catholicvietnam.net/index>, accessed June 12, 2022)

² *The Cambridge Companion to The Trinity*, Edited by Peter C. Phan (Cambridge University Press, 2004), page. 402.

³ Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical letter Ut Unum Sint (That all may be one)*: On Commitment to Ecumenism, 8. Joseph Ratzinger, *Christian Faith, yesterday and today*, p. 248.

Minh has the answer: *“The life of the Trinity is the model for all human organizations. Be united in the essentials, but willingly accept the rich diversity in the secondary.”* The Second Vatican Council wrote: *“The universal Church emerges as a united people springing from the unity of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”*.⁴ Besides, Saint John Paul II wrote in *UT UNUM SINT (That All May Be One)*: *“The faithful are one because, in the Spirit, they are in communion with the Son and, in him, share in his communion with the Father: “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1Jn 1:3).*⁵

To live the mystery of Trinitarian communion in our community, first of all, we must love one another. When we love one another, we will become disciples of Jesus, as he said: *“If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples”* (Jn 13, 35). Becoming disciples of Jesus is also trying to imitate the Trinitarian example of living in communion with each other. Moreover, the more we give love to others, the more our faith increases. As one author wrote: *“the closer one is to another, the closer one is to oneself. Only when we come out of ourselves can we find ourselves again. It is only through the other, through the presence of the other, that man finds himself again.”*⁶ The Second Vatican Council also affirmed: *“The more people are united with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the easier it is for them to strengthen their brotherhood”*.⁷

Second, to live the Trinitarian communion in the community, we must know how to forgive each other. Every human being has flaws and mistakes towards God, himself, and others. That weakness is the human condition after Adam and Eve sinned. If we love them, we must also forgive them. When we forgive them, God will also forgive us. In the Lord's Prayer, we read: *“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us”* (Mt 6, 12). God always forgives our sins, no matter how serious they are. And God also desires that we have a kind heart like Him to forgive the mistakes of our brothers and sisters. To forgive an injustice is to elevate oneself to the pinnacle of virtue, rise above nature, and imitate God.⁸ Forgiveness is one of the best gifts you can give yourself. – Katrina Maye. Besides, The Second Vatican Council said that *“God alone is the judge and knows all hearts: he, therefore, forbids us from judging anyone's secret sins.”*⁹

Finally, every Christian is called to be a witness of the Trinity and of communion for the people of this day and age. Bishop Nguyen Van Vien wrote in his book: *“The Church family values both personal relationships and community relationships. On a personal level, the faithful are called to enter into intimate communion with God. Their relationship with God is interpersonal. On the community level, the family Jesus established requires everyone to join hands to build community life.”*¹⁰. Pope Paul VI

⁴ The Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, m.4

⁵ Pope John Paul II, *Encyclical letter Ut Unum Sint (That all may be one)*: On Commitment to Ecumenism, 9.

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Christian Faith, yesterday and today*, p. 248.

⁷ The Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 7.

⁸ Saint. Gregoire De Nysse. <https://ductinjesus.com>, accessed June 12, 2022

⁹ The Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, m.8.

¹⁰ Jos Dong Dang, *lived in communion according to the example of the Trinity* (<http://www.conggiaovietnam.net/index>, accessed June 12, 2022

wrote: "*People today prefer witnesses to teachers*". Therefore, what we say with our lips is not as valuable as the work we do. We have an example of mother Terese: she is a small person, but her heart for the poor is huge. Her act of cuddling and caring for orphaned children and homeless people is much larger than the teachings of the scholars.

We become heroes when we humble ourselves to lift up the weak. This action will make people realize the Trinitarian communion more than theoretical words. Furthermore, when we have a love of the Trinity present in our lives, we will courageously preach the Word of God to everyone around us. The Holy Spirit will consecrate us, making us wise and resilient in the face of life's difficulties. Living the mystery of communion also means becoming the most genuine image of the Trinity.

Conclusion

The 16th Universal Synod of Bishops in 2023 starts at the diocesan phase with the theme: "*Towards a cooperative Church: communion - participation - mission*". The Church wants to speak out about the role of communion so that the image of the Trinity becomes closer to everyone. Saint Paul speaks of this role in a passage describing the function of each member of the body: "*If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it does not, for this reason, belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not, for this reason, belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? Where would the sense of smell be if the whole body were hearing? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you."*" (1 Corinthians 12:15-21). We need each other in our lives, and we also help each other to get better every day. If we want to be like this, we must follow the advice of St. Paul: "*Living in truth and in charity, we will grow up.*" (Ep 4, 15-16).

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Biodata

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The Way of Love according to Jesus (Jn 15:12-17)


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Abstract

The two words "love" are frequently overused, especially among Christians. However, in John 15:12-17, Jesus teaches us a new way to love based on His own example. His new approach to love is to do what is best for others, to love truly, and to initiate romantic relationships. Accepting all gestures of love is the ultimate manifestation of divine love. Love is present everywhere and dominates everyone's life. "Love one another" is also God's commandment. But love here is not love in a worldly way. People often only love those who love them, love those who seem to benefit them, and love according to their selfish nature. Jesus wants each of us to love one another as he has loved.

Keywords: Love, marriage, commandment, God

Introduction

From the past and until today, love has been the most exploited topic in different fields such as music, the movie industry, art, literature, and so on. It is also said: Love is as old as the earth. That is, love has existed since the earth or the old earth, the older love is. Like that, old love is so old! There are many topics about love. However, sometimes love is viewed from a distorted perspective, which makes love today like walking on the edge of an abyss with a degraded lifestyle, moral decadence, and broken marriage. In John 15:12-17, Jesus showed us how to love true based on the example of his love. The way of love, according to Jesus, is to do what is best for others, to love sincerely, and to take the first step in love.

¹² This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you.

¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

¹⁶ It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

¹⁷ This I command you: love one another.

(John, 2022)

The background of the passage

At the end of 15:1–11, dominated by the image of the vine (vv. 1–8), the disciples were told to keep the Father’s commandments in order to abide in the love of Jesus (vv. 9–10) and have the fullness of joy (v. 11). What are these commandments they must keep in order to abide in his love? The heart of the discourse (vv. 12–17) provides the answer. Jesus has shown love in 13:1–38. He now tells them of the need for their response to that love (15:12, 17), built on his prior love for them (vv. 13–16)¹.

The ways of love

Reading the Gospel of John, we enjoy a beautiful love song in which “love” is considered as the main “tone”. He loves us with a love which no words can tell, above all our thought and imagination. All of Jesus' words and deeds express self-sacrificing love to obey the will of the Father and give his life to atone for the sins of mankind. Jesus came to earth to love people to the end. He came to share in the joy of the wedding feast at Cana and also came to the table with sinners, despite all the scornful whispers of life. Jesus forgave people’s sins and cured all sicknesses and diseases of the body as well as the soul of men. He is especially concerned about widows, children, the abandoned, and so on² (Faber, 2012). In the passage Jn 15:12-17, we can see some outstanding aspects of how to love:

First, to love as Jesus loves is to do the best for the person whom you love. Love is not only wanting what is good for the person you love but also expressing that desire by doing the most concrete things. In true love, there is no half-heartedness or limitations. To love is to love to the end. If there is calculation and comparison, it is not love. The border of love is love without borders. True love is ready to give one’s life as the Lord himself said: “*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends*” (John 15:13). These are not only great and beautiful words of God, but God said and then God did. Here he shows the efficacy of love, which is that one undergoes death for his friends; this is a sign of the greatest love³ (Aquinas, 2010). The cross demonstrates the extent to which God’s reconciling love in Christ is willing to go. It is a love without limits, a love “to the end”. Indeed, God “sacrificed” his life for his friends when he washed their feet, and especially when he loved to the point of sacrificing his precious life. His price for loving us, for wanting to redeem us so that we might have life and

¹ Francis J. Moloney, *Love in the Gospel of John: An Exegetical, Theological, and Literary Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2013), 97.

² Frederick William Faber, *All for Jesus - The Easy Ways of Divine Love* (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 2012), 18-20.

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John - Chapters 13–21*, Translated by Fabian Larcher, O.P., and James A. Weisheipl, O.P. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 107.

have it abundantly. In reality, when we go out to meet a friend's need or when we are willing to spend time with someone and give ourselves up for him or her, we are laying down our lives for that person like Jesus.

Second, to love as God loves is to love others with sincere love. A person is called a friend either because he loves or is loved⁴ (Aquinas, 2010). One of the special marks of favor shown in the scriptures is being called the friend of God. Abraham is called the friend of God (cf. Isaiah 41:8). God also speaks with Moses as a man speaks with his friend (cf. Exodus 33:11) (Long, 2018). Jesus, the Lord, and Master, in turn, call the disciples his friends rather than his servants. Jesus said: *"I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends"* (John 15:15) (John, 2022). This sincere love does not stop at words when calling each other, talking to each other with "friends", but especially through the way, they behave with each other, containing content that speaks of equality, respect, openness, and wholeheartedness. Of this, Jesus spoke and demonstrated in his actions. Jesus shared with the apostles the Lord's knowledge of his Father: *"I have told you everything I have heard from my Father"* (John 15:15) (John, 2022). Jesus also desires and requires a true friendship that is sincere attachment to one another and with noble values: *"You are my friends if you do what I command you"* (John 15:14) (John, 2022). Therefore, to love as God loves is expressed through sincere acts of love.

Finally, to love as God loves is to love with a love that precedes. The initiative is a sign of someone willing to take the first move in a relationship. The Bible presents God as the one who always takes the first step in showing love to people. According to the Bible, God is the one doing this. He stays at Zacchaeus's home, even though Zacchaeus does not talk (cf. Luke 19:1-10). Living in love cannot sit and wait. There are still arguments to justify that there is not enough talent, not enough strength, or not yet the time, and so on, for those who do not know how to love. The nature of true friendship and love is the willingness to give all for the beloved. Having loved, there is always work to be done. For instance, Paul affirms that Christ died for us while we were rebelling against him. Who among us dares to think and dare to hope that we will be friends of God, will be loved by Him to the point of sacrificing our lives for us? If we don't dare to think and dare to hope, God himself has thought, wanted, and done it for us. Jesus said, *"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you"* (John 15:16) (John, 2022). The disciples, through no acts of the will or physical effort on their part, have been drawn into a new relationship⁵ (Moloney, 1991). Moreover, Jesus expects and prepares for that love to mature and bear much fruit (cf. John 15:16). Indeed, he wished that love would last forever as his disciples turned to his Father for help in his name as a guarantee of acceptance: *"Whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you"* (John 15:16) (John, 2022). So, always taking the first step in acts of love is a full expression of God-like love.

⁴ Ibid., p.109.

⁵ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 425.

Conclusion

In short, the way of Jesus about love is to love completely selflessly and generously as God loves: A sincere love; a love that is thorough, wholehearted to the point of sacrificing one's life for the one you love, and a love that always goes first. It's not easy to love like that. Loving people as you love yourself is difficult. "Love as God loves" is even more difficult. It is a great challenge to our imperfect human nature. But difficulty does not mean impossible. Many of our brothers and sisters have heroically accomplished that difficult task by imbibing God's word. They were true disciples of Christ. Whose disciple am I? The answer depends on each of us, whether we love or refuse to love.

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The Punishment of God


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Abstract

People who experience hardship as a result of diseases and natural calamities sometimes ask "why?" and frequently believe that God is punishing them. This essay will shed light on whether God punishes or not. Why does God discipline? What is the Punisher's purpose?

These questions are answered to demonstrate that God is good. Evils, both physical and moral, are not God's will. Everyone wants to make others better.

Keywords: punishment, evil, moral, Old Testament, mercy

Introduction

With the proliferation of the Coronavirus, also known as Covid-19, and the deaths it has caused, many of us ask "why?" Why did a pandemic occur? Why did God permit the pandemic to occur? Why does God not intervene when we cry out in pain and even out of dread of being let down? God's punishment of the world? To further comprehend this subject, let's examine whether God punishes or not in greater detail. Why does God discipline? And God's retribution for what?

Does God punish?

To better understand this issue, let's learn about the evil people have to endure in the world. Many people think that physical or moral evil is a punishment from God, but that is not the case.

It is a very difficult thing because if evil exists by its essence nature, we also define evil only as a good that has been degraded by evil, and evil is always mixed with the good as Etienne Borne said: "*We can never define evil directly. Not only because evil always goes hand in hand with the good, but because it is impossible to enumerate an evil without mentioning a good, evil is the lack of good.*"¹

Evil can be physical or moral. Being physically evil when lacking the material (illness, hardship, natural disaster...)²; moral evil that starts from deviating from the right

¹ DOMINIQUE MORIN, Gọi Tên Thượng Đế, original "Pour Dire Dieu", Publisher. Cerf 1989, Dang Xuan Thanh and Luy Nguyen Anh Tuan translated Oriental Publishing House, 2008, p. 207.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, translation of the Bishops' Conference of Vietnam, Religious Publishing House, 2012, No. 310.

order of conduct in the conduct of man, the only being responsible for his actions when he causes evils, sins, and shortcomings...³ In both cases, evil originates from creatures: on the physical level, things arise from the main nature of being (e.g., volcanoes). On the moral aspect evil arises from abuses of human freedom (for example, supporting abortion).

From the above arises an important question: Is God the author of evil? Why did He not prohibit it? Philosophy and theology answer that God - perfect, absolute, eternal - cannot be a direct or indirect agent of evil. This always comes from the creature, imperfect, relative, and temporal. God can stop all evil, but He does not want to do it so as not to interfere artificially with the laws of nature. In the works of Enchiridion, "*The Prohibition of Christian Doctrine*", written in 423, Augustine asserts that God will not allow evil to happen unless better things are drawn to it. Indeed, all suffering, however pitiful and incomprehensible, is a school for human and spiritual maturity for those who make use of it.

Thus, God does not punish, He wants to leave everything according to the laws of nature, and one of the most important things is to respect human freedom.

Purpose of punishment?

God is good; as we learn above that God does not punish. But reading in the Old Testament many times, we see God punishing the nations, including his own. So why is that? And so, what does it mean?

In the book of Genesis, in chapters 2 and 3, testimony in which the author of the Holy Bible gives many literary images to reason about the origin of evil and sin in human life.⁴ The fallen man narrative (Gen 3) explains man's sinful state and cause of suffering. Thereby we see that evil is not caused by God⁵ but is the consequence of sin. Man has failed to use his freedom to do evil, and then lose his divine happiness with God (Gen 3:23-24).

For the prophets, it was the corrupt soul of man that was the cause of sin. The tendency to follow evil is deeply rooted in human nature (Jer 12:23). Therefore, Basil did not accept the view that moral evil originates from God but that it is rooted in the human heart.⁶

We read in the Old Testament many pages describing natural calamities (from droughts to floods, epidemics, and especially death) as manifestations of God's fit of anger deliver a telling blow at individuals or groups that have already been destroyed, law error. We can cite the following typical passage from Isaiah: "*Behold, the name of the Lord comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger, and dense is His smoke; His*

³ Ibid., 311.

⁴ GEORG KRAUS, *Sáng Thế Luận Qua Các Tác Giả*, dịch theo SCHOPFUNGSLEHRE, Verlag Styria, Graz, Wien, Köln, 1991, p. 164-167.

⁵ MARC DONZÉ, "La Pensée Théologique de Maurice Zundel Pauvreté et Liberation", Maurice Zundel Theological Thought – Purification and Liberation, translated by Nguyen Thi Chung, Tôn Giáo, 2004, p. 342-343.

⁶ GEORG KRAUS, *Sáng Thế Luận Qua Các Tác Giả*, translated by Schopfungslehre, Verlag Styria, Graz, Wien, Köln, 1991, p. 177.

lips are filled with indignation, and His tongue is like a consuming fire ... For Topheth has long been ready, indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, a pyre of fire with plenty of wood; The breath of the Lord, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire” (Is 30:27-33). Similar passages can be found many times in the Old Testament, and of course impossible to take the literal meaning. The reason is that no one has seen the burning face of the Lord, his shouting lips. The author only understands the figurative meaning that calamities are likened to punishments that God sends on sinners, whether they are individuals or a collective.

If it is said that God is angry to punish people, is that true? Let's find out together to have a clear understanding.

On the one hand, we need to overcome some misconceptions about the explanation of natural phenomena. Previously, natural disasters (drought, flood, crop failure, epidemiology) were explained as God pouring out his wrath on the earth. Today, we should no longer simply combine plagues with sin. Their causes are very complex. We cannot explain the annual flood in central Vietnam as a punishment for the people of this region; the reason is that it is unlikely that they committed more crimes than people in southern Vietnam.

On the other hand, couldn't God create a world in which people do not have to suffer any kind of torture? The Church affirms that: Almighty God could do this, but he did not, but created a world in a state of perfection, towards ultimate perfection. Thus, for how long creation has not yet reached its perfection, there is also a bad physical evil for the same physical good. In other words, creation has to grow to be perfect, but to be perfect, it has to be transformed, and transformation requires a lot of suffering that we humans call evil.⁷

Thus, God has the power to send trials to people while living on earth. Challenges can conduce many benefits to people, even if it causes people to work hard and sacrifice in their own struggles and victories. Challenge purifies man and makes him grow up. Challenges give people the opportunity to prove their love for God (the story of Job is an example). When people overcome challenges like an athlete, people joyfully receive Kingdom rewards.

God's punishment to purify people

God's punishment is not to destroy man. But this punishment wants to make people better.

For example, people can punish themselves for their shortcomings. This may be the case for people who like to smoke despite knowing the dangers it brings to their health. Does smoking not cause cancer or emphysema? Is not environmental imbalance a natural reaction to the attacks which it has to endure? There is a proverb that *"God always forgives, but nature never forgives man"*. This helps us better understand why some - but not all - of evil always to perform again.

⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, translation of the Bishops' Conference of Vietnam, Tôn Giáo, 2012, No. 310.

Regardless of all of the above, there are still people who think that illness or other problems are punishment for the sins of a person or their ancestors. The Gospels refute this idea: standing before a blind from birth, Jesus is asked if it was his sins or those of his parents that made him so blind. Jesus said that *“It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents”*. But rather: for that evil (blindness) to be transformed into good (that is, for God's work to be done in him) (Jn 9:1-3).

And will the evils be displayed against us and have any effect? Really no. They can attack those who fear them because they have no force in themselves, no power because they are influenced and believe that evil is stronger than God. This is sin. Nothing can defeat God, so take courage! Don't do anything bad. Think good, belief and nothing can attack you. That is what God has promised through His Word (Rom 8:31-37).

Conclusion

In summary, After researching, we found that. God is generous in mercy. It's not His punishment on people. Evils happen in life to help people to purify and be more conscious of their weak destiny. God gave man freedom, so man has the right to decide his own life. Good or bad is for people to choose. To have a feeling of responsibility, to use our freedom properly, and live as God wants.

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