



Living the truth through charity is walking a fine line through the messy confusion of life. The truth is not complete if not presented with charity; the facts themselves might be truth, but the attitude behind the facts must also be presented with kindness and compassion. No truth will be accepted through anger.

A lie presented with charity is more accepted than a truth without love. At this point in history as in all other points, it is essential that we, the faithful, present our strongly held beliefs carefully, gently, and with the charity of Jesus Christ.

The challenge of charity seems as huge as Goliath, but with some courage and armed with the right weapons, this giant can be slain. Here are some short points to help you navigate the challenge of charity in our time.

1. Be Christ-like

Christ is the ultimate example of charity in truth. We are all called to be Christ-like, we are all called to: “Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect” Mt 5:48. In the times of social media outlets what does this look like? How can we communicate when everything is shot down in the name of Love? We are desperately in need of charitable responses to differing opinions. When the conflict feels like a thorn in the flesh and you call out for it to be taken from you, remember the Lord said: “My Grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” We are to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is by letting Him be perfect IN us, through our humble weakness. The temptation to abandon being Christ-like is strong, especially when we feel too small to do the job right. Resist the temptation with faith and continue the conversation.

2. Learn from the saints

It is important to learn from the saints – they aren’t just random people to whom we pray. Learn the lives of the saints who have the heroic virtue of showing truth through charity. Saint John Paul II is a wonderful example. His faith formation was during World War II

and then the subsequent communist regime in Poland. While the faith was being taught in secret, he learned to love and serve those around him while teaching the truth of the Gospel. He is quoted saying: “For no matter how numerous our activities, our ministries, however numerous our concerns—if there is no love, everything becomes meaningless.” Another saint that will help during this time is Saint Thomas More, who stood up to his friend King Henry VIII with grace and love while not rejecting his faith. He said “Tribulation is a gift from God, one that he gives his special friends.” Pope Francis, who not a saint, is a great example of charity in truth in today’s culture.

3. Be not Afraid

Jesus’ call to us throughout the centuries when living through adversity is to have faith, not fear. “Do not be afraid, just have faith”(Mk 5:36) Our culture and our Church are facing many challenges that can seem overwhelming and tempt despair, but have hope because the head of the serpent has already been crushed! Like the angels once did, we must stand on the side of God and persevere, so that in the end we will not fall like the demons. On social media most of the defeating responses are made in order to create fear. Fear is silencing to the point where there is no longer anyone available to be the voice of charity. Be charitable anyway; fear is not from God.

4. Communicate and turn the other cheek

Communication is essential to defend your faith. When we are silenced by fear or virtual persecution the communication stops and so does our message. Charity while attempting to be the voice of truth is what will keep most of the communication lines open. To communicate it is necessary that the people use the same definition for words. Sometimes you will have to communicate with people who don’t define words the same as you. It is best to define your terms and/or use different words to get the message across to avoid unnecessary confusion. When actually engaging in a conversation, it will most likely be necessary to turn the other cheek. To turn the other cheek does not mean to allow abuse, nor does it mean to back down from your position. In essence it means to show the other person that you will not be engaging in the reality that they put forth for you. Put forth a new reality in love.

5. Forgiveness

Another firm structure of our faith is forgiveness. Sometimes there are people who will be mean just to be mean – forgive them. Charity is not only putting forth truth with grace and love; it is also accepting the fact that some choose to reject it. Forgiveness in charity is something done without being asked. Forgive those who say malicious things to you and to others. We pray: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” If we believe the words we say to Our Father, we must forgive others for the sake of our own forgiveness. This act not only halts the continued hurt; it saves us from

becoming bitter and despondent. This is much easier said than done, but it is an essential tool in light of charity. A fitting in-the-moment prayer would be the words Jesus said on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."(Luke 23:34)

6. You are not your opinion

You are not your opinion, and neither are they. Our culture today defends their opinions as if it is their soul. When their opinion is challenged, you are attacking the center of who they think they are. While this is not true, keeping this in mind will help with perspective on the wording chosen to speak truth. Opinions can be changed, but only with charity. Knowing your audience is very important. People who have differing opinions are hurting, like you are hurting. They lack the words to explain how they feel, just as you do. Also remember this because your opinions will be challenged, and unless the challenge is actually toward your character, it is not a personal attack. Remember Jesus said: "Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves."(Mt 10:16) Notice he did not say "Be as vicious as snakes and as stupid as pigeons!"

As Christians we know these points. We have heard them before. None of this is news, but sometimes it is good be reminded of what is important. The reason we need to stress these points now is because if we do not master them, we will not gain anything when it comes to the Hot Button topics. There will always be Hot Button topics but we can overcome them with the grace of Charity, alongside the Sacraments, as weapons of faith. The culture completely believes that Christianity is a call to be charitable, which is why they are so offended when we miss our mark as Christians. Now is the time to hit the mark, strive to show them what they believe but cannot see. This point in history will be a saint-making machine. Heroic virtue is only heroic if it is tested. Saints: May we raise them, may we become them.