

# AGAPAO GOD

Mk 12:28-39; I Cor 13

**DEFINING** the TERM: *Agape*: “a giving, active love on the other’s behalf” (TDNT);  
Thus: *agape* is a wish for, or a commitment to, or an act in behalf of another’s good;  
i.e. **CHARITY** (fr. L. *caritas*: benevolence, friendship)  
**NOTA BENE**: Not “*Unconditional*,” but *Intentional* and *Unquenchable*—thus *degrees* of  
charity, re nature & guilt; none for Satan & demons; more for better, less for worse, in  
accord with Justice; most intense re self

## I. BE ATTENTIVE TO (Ps 27:4)

- A. Simone Weil: love has “attention for its substance”
- B. Illuminating expressions: “Attention!” “May I have your attention, please.” “Wisdom, let us attend” (ancient liturgy)
- C. Railroad Crossing Clue:
  - 1. Stop—arrest the rush; **be** rather than do, for a moment;
  - 2. Look—concentrate; ignore distractions; peer *along*, not *at* light beam, seeing creation, history, experience (CSL)
  - 3. Listen—to the “music of spheres,” the Word of LORD, “written on the heart” Natural Law

## II. BE GRATEFUL FOR (PS 103:1-2)

- A. Personal goods: being; health; food; shelter;
- B. Relationships: kin; friends; communion of saints; God
- C. Opportunities: to learn, to create, to share, to love
- D. Grace: salvation; eternal life

## III. BE AVAILABLE FOR (Is 6:8)

- A. Biblical illustrations: Samuel & Isaiah: “Here am I”
- B. Biblical injunction: “present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Ro 12:1)
- C. Experiential evidence: when in love, instantly responsive to requests
- D. Possible callings: vocation; service; witness/martyr; \$\$\$

## IV. BE PERSISTENT IN (Song 8:7)

- A. Biblical illustration: lover in Song—“many waters will not quench;” Ruth’s loyalty—“whither thou goest, I will go”
- B. Biblical declaration: “love never fails” (I Cor 13:8)—though prophesies, tongues, knowledge all pass away
- C. Biblical injunction: “he who endures to the end shall be saved” (Mt 10:22)
- D. Just as faith=holding on to what believe, despite wavering moods (CSL), so too love=holding fast to commitments despite ebb & flow of feelings
- E. Illuminating examples: Mother Teresa’s “dark night” lifelong; William Carey’s missionary endeavors despite apparent failure

## V. BE ENTHUSIASTIC FOR (i.e. *theos*-indwelling, inspiring cf. Song 2:9)

- A. Biblical illustration: beloved in Song—“like a gazelle or a young stag” (2:9)
- B. Platonic *theia mania* instructive: “beside oneself” attuned to divine realm
  - 1. Prophecy: enraptured awareness, consequent declaration
  - 2. Poetry: Psalms; Christian hymns (John Newton; Charles Wesley; Fanny Crosby) & oratorios (Handel’s Messiah)
  - 3. Prayer: James 5 re “effectual, fervent prayer of righteous man”
  - 4. Praise: Ps 103:1—“Bless the LORD, oh my soul”
- C. Grace-inspired (Spirit-urged) *caritas*/charity enjoined in NT (cf. I Cor 13)
- D. “Divine Worship” prescribed & urged, both in Scripture & Tradition
- E. Illuminating examples: St Francis; George Muller; Mother Teresa

## CHARITY: THE GREATEST of the SUPERNATURAL VIRTUES

Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, II

// According to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* vii. 2, 3) not every love has the character of friendship, but that love which is together with benevolence, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him. [23, 1]

// Augustine says: "By charity I mean the movement of the soul towards the enjoyment of God for His own sake." But a movement of the soul is something created in the soul. Therefore charity is something created in the soul.

// . . . charity is not something created in the soul, but is the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling in the mind. [23, 2]

// Augustine says: "Charity is a virtue which, when our affections are perfectly ordered, unites us to God, for by it we love Him." [23, 3]

// Charity . . . is a kind of friendship of man for God" [23, 5]

// The object of charity is the good, which is also the object of the will. [24, 1]

// Now the object of charity is not a sensible good, but the Divine good which is known by the intellect alone. [24, 1]

// Therefore charity can be in us neither naturally, nor through acquisition by the natural powers, but by the infusion of the Holy Ghost, Who is the love of the Father and the Son, and the participation of Whom in us is created charity . . . . [24, 2]

// Wherefore the quantity of charity depends neither on the condition of nature nor on the capacity of natural virtue, but only on the will of the Holy Ghost Who divides His gifts *according as He will*. [24, 3; cf. Eph 4:7]

// Now every mortal sin is contrary to charity by its very nature, which consists in man's loving God above all things, and subjecting himself to Him entirely, by referring all that is his to God. It is therefore essential to charity that man should so love God as to wish to submit to Him in all things, and always to follow the rule of His commandments; since whatever is contrary to His commandments is manifestly contrary to charity, and therefore by its very nature is capable of destroying charity. [24, 12]

// Now we love our friends out of charity. Therefore we should love ourselves too out of charity.

// Two things may be considered in the sinner, his nature and his guilt. According too his nature, which he has from God, he has a capacity for happiness . . . wherefore we ought to love sinners, out of charity, in respect of their nature.

On the other hand their guilt is opposed to God, and is an obstacle to happiness. Wherefore, in respect to their guilt whereby they are opposed to God, all sinners are to be hated, even one's father or mother or kindred . . . . For it is our duty to hate, in the sinner, his being a sinner, and to love in him, his being a man capable of bliss; and this is to love him truly, out of charity, for God's sake. [25, 6]

// Therefore we ought not to have charity for the demons who live in hell and compass death. [25, 11]

// Nature is not done away, but perfected, by glory. Now the order of charity . . . is derived from nature: since all things naturally love themselves more than others. [26, 13]

// . . . the degrees of love may be distinguished either in respect of the good which a man desires for another, or according to the intensity of love itself. In the first way a man will love better men more than himself, and those who are less good, less than himself, because, by reason of the perfect conformity of the human to the Divine will, each of the blessed will desire everyone to have what is due to him according to Divine justice.

// But in the second way a man will love himself more than even his better neighbors, because of the intensity of the act of love arises on the part of the person who loves . . . . [26, 13]