

**“WHEREVER A CHILD OR A
VULNERABLE
PERSON
IS SAFE,
CHRIST IS
SERVED AND HONORED”.**

**CHARITY AND
PROTECTION**



"When preventive practices are established, even in the most remote communities, a promise is being written: that every child, every vulnerable person, will find in the ecclesial community a safe environment. This is the driving force behind what should be, for us, a comprehensive conversion".
Pope Francis

INTRODUCTION

In a world in which the name of God is sometimes associated with revenge or even with the obligation of hatred and violence, the theme of Charity and Protection comes as a message of hope and with a very concrete meaning for humanity today.¹

To speak of Charity is to speak of a very important and topical issue. It's a theme that we believe runs through salvation history and our Congregational history. Given its importance for indifference, individualism and the violation of human rights at all costs, in our current reality, works of charity constitute a sign of protection, a tangible testimony of the love and compassion that resides in the human heart.

We want to enter into this reflection with a question: In the context of abuses, like our Charism, **can Charity be at the service of the protection of humanity?**

On 26 February 2016, in receiving in audience the participants of the International Congress promoted by the Pontifical Council Cor Unum on the theme "Charity will never have an end", "Perspectives on the Ten Years of the Encyclical Deus Caritas Est", the Holy Father, Francis, pointed out that charity is the foundation of the history of the Church." It is the story of the love that we have received from God and that we must bring to the world: this charity received and given is the foundation of the history of the Church and of the history of each one of us".²

The second chapter of Pope Francis' encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, dwells on the parable of the "Good Samaritan". The Encyclical calls for an active part in the rehabilitation of wounded societies, which, when dragged along by determinism or fatalism, seek to justify indifference. Disengaging from others is common nowadays, which fosters an exclusion that a large part of society looks at with indifference. The Holy Father stresses in the document that for a Christian it is not "we must all be equal", because we are all sons and daughters of the same Father.

That is the Charity we have received from God that impels us to be at the service of humanity. We enter into this reflection in the light of the Word of God on the basis of two fundamental parables that for us are an expression of God's charity and protection that we are called to imitate: the example of love in John 13:1-15, a stranger on the road in Luke 10:25-37.

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1. UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF CONCEPTS

CHARITY

The term “charity” may have several meanings:

- The attitude of those who act selflessly in favor of others, without expecting anything in return.
- Theological virtue in the Christian religion that consists in loving God above all things and one’s neighbor as oneself.
- Feeling that drives solidarity with others. Alms or aid given to those in need.³

Charity is acting selflessly, in favor of one’s neighbor, without expecting anything in return. It is applicable to the different solidarity actions through which support is provided to those who need it. Recompensa.

It is closely associated with the values promoted by the Christian religion, fundamentally that of love of neighbor. However, charity is basically expressed in the willingness to help and support the other, the most needy, without waiting reward.⁴

The Encyclical Letter of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas Est*, in its number 35, tells us that “He who is able to help recognizes that precisely in this way he too is helped; being able to help is not his merit or a reason for pride. This is grace.”

In the Bible, charity is described as follows:

“Charity is long-suffering, it is benign; charity does not envy, charity is not boastful, it is not puffed up; he does not do anything improper, he does not seek his own, he does not get angry, he does not think evil; one does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices in the truth; He endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

In this sense, charity is at the core of Christian morality and is based on love of God and neighbour. It is already present in the commandments of God’s law: “Love God above all things.” And in the preaching of Jesus Christ: “Love one another” (Jn 13:34) Charity requires the practice of good; It is selfless and generous, and it provides the spirit with feelings of joy, peace, and mercy.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in n. 1856 points out the vital importance of charity for the Christian life. In this virtue are found the essence and nucleus of Christianity, it is the center of Christ’s preaching and it is the most important command. Jn 15:12; 15,17; Jn 13,34.⁵

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PROTECTION

Protection, from the Latin *protectio*, is the action and effect of protecting (to protect, defend or protect something or someone). Protection is preventive care in the event of a possible risk or problem.

This instinct that human beings have when in the midst of a difficulty we seek refuge in something or someone, when we are careful of what can happen to us being protected either personally, physically, socially.

The work of protection consists fundamentally in ensuring that the abused people are safe from the harm that other people could inflict on them.

The Role of Charity in the Protection of Humanity

Charity, as a concept and as a practice, has been present in the history of **humanity** since its beginnings. The need to help others, to share what one has and to alleviate the suffering of others has been a fundamental driving force in the construction of fairer societies and solidarity.⁶

Protection is all those activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of all persons, without discrimination, in accordance with existing legal regimes. This means that protection is a fundamental objective for the whole of the action humanitarian.⁷

Charity, in its most basic form, was expressed through caring for the sick, protecting the weak, and helping those in need.

In our Congregation of Sisters of Charity of Santa Ana. In 1804 Charity was the surname of a group led by Father Juan Bonal in Our Lady of Grace Hospital at Zaragoza. This fraternity had as its objective the service of humanity of that time. “Since Charity is the origin of our Congregation, the reason for its existence, its specific character, its apostolic mission and the end to which it tends, we have called ourselves from the beginning Sisters of Charity.”⁸

Don Ignacio Tellechea, speaking of the fraternity that was born at the beginning of the Congregation, tells us the following: “The origin of the Fraternity has much to do with a beautiful adventure inspired by CHARITY, a very generous charity, with no limitations other than those imposed by services”.⁹

Charity in the truth, of which Jesus Christ has made himself a witness by his earthly life and, above all, by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force for the authentic development of every person and of all humanity.¹⁰

Charity is not limited to alleviating poverty or suffering. It is an act of love that has the power to transform lives. By helping others, we realize that we are not alone in the world, that together we can make a difference. Charity teaches us the importance of compassion, empathy, and solidarity. It reminds us that we are part of a global community and that we have a responsibility to take care of each other.

Charity is a bridge that unites people, a bridge that extends across cultural, religious and social differences. Charity invites us to see the humanity in each individual, to recognize the value of every life. In a world full of divisions and conflicts, charity is a beacon of peace, a reminder that kindness and compassion are the most important values. In the midst of our synodal experience, charity lived in fraternity is a protection of all members.

2. SOCIAL DIMENSION



- Charity as protection of the weakest (people subjected to insults and manipulations...)

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“When it is lived and expressed, CHARITY towards the unfortunate has another name: MERCY = miseris - cor - dare. This is the name given to CHARITY in the manuscript of Barcelona”.¹¹

The followers of Jesus recognize themselves by their closeness to the poor, to the little ones, to the sick and to the imprisoned, to the excluded, to the forgotten, to those who are deprived of food and clothing (cf. Mt 25:31-36; CCC, 2443). “Every Christian and every community is called to be God’s instruments for the liberation and promotion of the poor” (EG, 187).¹²

- Charity as a promotion of equal dignity

Charity as the promotion of equality implies fighting for the equality, dignity and rights of all people, especially those who are in situations of vulnerability or disadvantage. Charity leads us to question social inequalities and to work for a more just and equitable world.

Being a gift received by all, charity in truth is a force that founds the community, unifies men and women in such a way that there are no barriers or boundaries.¹³

- Charity as the protection of nature

Charity is the supernatural virtue by which we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for God’s sake. It is the virtue par excellence because its

object is God himself and the motive for love of neighbor is the same: love of God. Charity gives life to all the other virtues, because it is necessary for them to be directed to God, for example, a person can be kind, only in order to obtain a reward, however, with charity, kindness, it becomes virtues that are practiced selflessly out of love for others. Without charity, the other virtues are as if dead.

3. THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF CHARITY

Charity, a fundamental pillar of the Christian faith, is a call to compassion, generosity and solidarity with those in need. In the Catholic Church, charity is seen as a divine mandate, a reflection of God's love for humanity.¹⁴

- Openness to others

Charity is based on the idea that we should treat others with kindness, understanding, and generosity, regardless of their situation or circumstances. It involves caring about the well-being of others and acting for their happiness and satisfaction.

Charity is a life in dialogue with others. Knowing how to listen and being open to the opinions of others are indispensable conditions for living charity. Only in this way will mutual dialogue be an ordinary opportunity to draw closer to the Truth.

- To promote fraternity among consecrated persons

Pope St. John Paul II in the Exhortation "Consecrated Life" highlights that fraternity is based on three pillars: The life of consecrated persons is first of all a hymn to the Holy Trinity, since they praise God the Father who called us to follow his Son, with the power of the Holy Spirit. Consecrated persons must be, in turn, a sign of fraternity among men and women and thirdly they are called to be a service of charity to the world. Let us remember that consecrated persons are called to live their vocation from the love of God in order to serve their brothers and sisters with all their love.

Consecrated life, deeply rooted in the examples and teachings of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Spirit. In the same exhortation, Pope St. John Paul defines Consecrated Life as "Service of Charity for the world."¹⁵

- Dying for others (heroism)

Researchers have found that people who had engaged in acts of bravery (such as rushing into a burning building or rescuing someone from the path of an oncoming train) aren't necessarily much different from control groups of non-heroes. According to them, empathy and compassion for others are key variables that contribute to heroic behavior.

Being a hero today goes beyond having supernatural abilities or fame; It involves cultivating human qualities such as courage, empathy, resilience, integrity, and solidarity to make the world a better place for all. Each person has the potential to be a hero in their daily lives, making a positive difference in their environment and contributing to building a more just and supportive society.¹⁶

Our Founders.... "They felt solidarity with the social problems of their time, in a sense of universal charity.... And they do so by exposing their lives in a gift that becomes a service of love, even to the point of heroism, and by bearing witness to a love that transcends the human."¹⁷

CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF HUMANITY

The reality of the world today offers us a complex situation. We are facing a wounded society where rights are limited. There is social inequality and poverty is increasing at all levels, contrary to what we are led to believe. There is a decoupling of social and political changes from morality.

The crisis has exposed a precarious social structure, deep inequality, a lack of opportunities for the least, insufficient social protection and a weakened community. Faced with this situation, we are called to reorganize well-being and care through a more equitable distribution among the family, incorporating the community.

There is a great need for social change. A time of commitment and hope.

The icon of the Good Samaritan “Jesus does not invite us to ask ourselves who are those who are close to us, but to become close to us.” Let us look at the model of the Good Samaritan. With compassion and indignation and following in the footsteps of Jesus, let us walk alongside the wounded in our society and offer hope through protection.

An illustration depicting the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A red L-shaped structure, representing a road or a barrier, is on the left. A teal silhouette of a Samaritan is shown riding a horse, leaning forward to help a wounded person. The wounded person is a lighter teal silhouette lying on the ground. A red jug is placed near the wounded person. The background is white, and the overall style is minimalist and graphic.

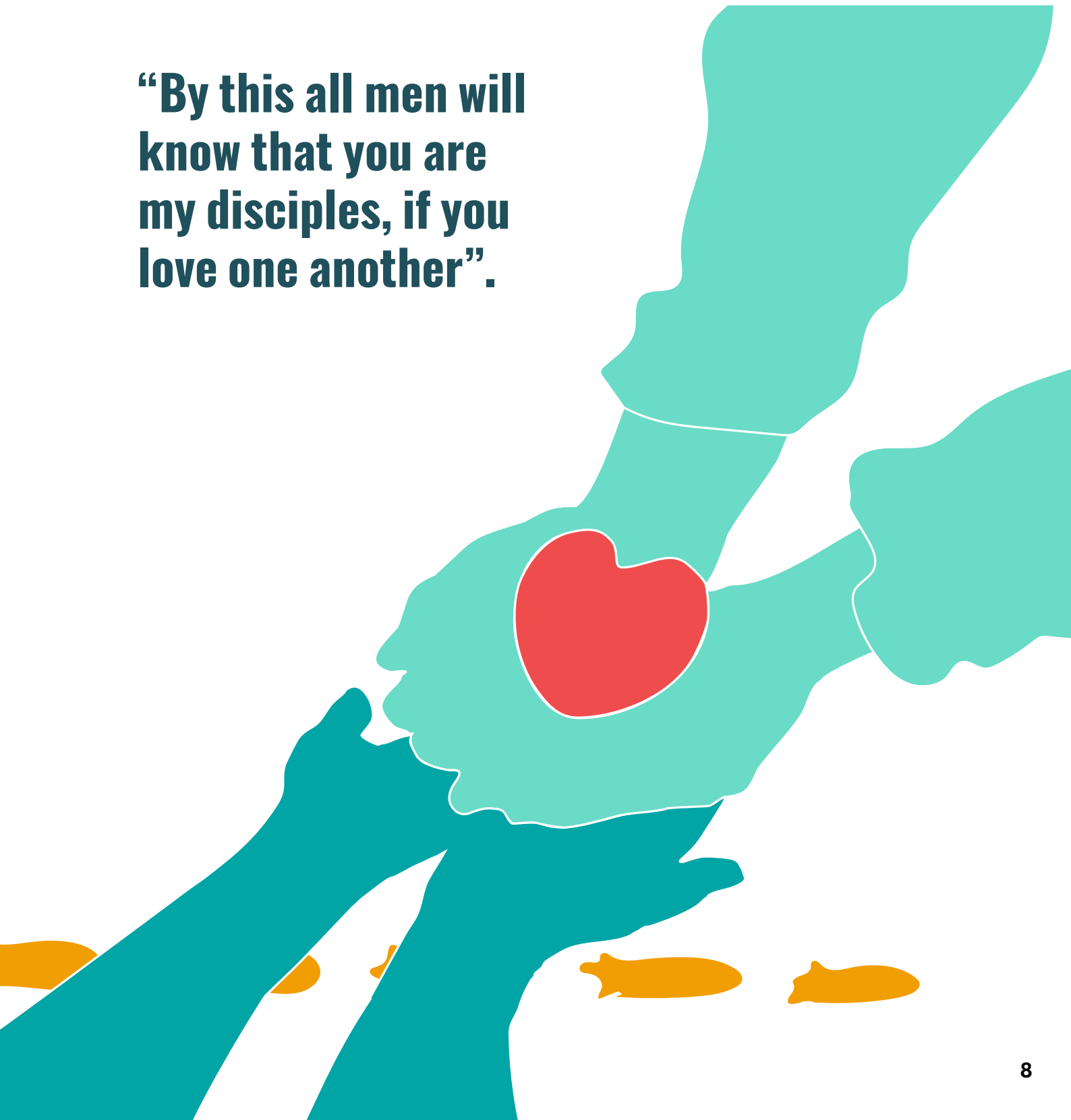
**“HOPE
THROUGH
PROTECTION”.**

CONCLUSION

We must not reject the one who asks us, because when we reject the one who asks us, perhaps we separate from us a brother, a father, a friend of ours from other existences.

Without Charity, we are nothing. Charity is the essence of Christianity. It is not optional, but the distinctive sign of Christ's disciple: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). More than a virtue, charity is life itself, life that protects life. Charity leads to protection and protection is charity, is Love.

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another".



TO REFLECT IN COMMUNITY

1. From the beginning, Charity has been our name. How does this name resonate in our everyday live?
2. Protection comes from Charity. Am I aware that my Sister in the Community needs an act of charity from me that protects her when it comes to acting and reacting?
3. By my consecration, I am called to be Charity. What witness do I give so that it can be said of me that I am truly Charity?
4. Let us resolve to evaluate our experience in relation to Charity and Protection in our relationships.

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