

Unity Novena Day 1: Discretion

“Holy discretion is a prudence which cannot be cheated, a fortitude which cannot be beaten, a perseverance from end to end, stretching from Heaven to earth, that is, from knowledge of Me to knowledge of self, and from love of Me to love of others.” – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

CCC 851: It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on." (2 Corinthians 5:14) Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; (1 Timothy 2:4) that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

The virtue of discretion helps us to avoid disunity through prudential discernment and merciful discipline. Discretion isn't just about knowing when to say the right thing or stay quiet. It is about balancing ideals with the reality of the fallen world, it's a holy wisdom that loves Jesus in each tabernacle He dwells in and in each sinner's soul He longs for. We can't know how to apply merciful love without first loving the Truth. To do that, we have to get the order right. Prayer, then action. Sacraments, then mission. Fear of the Lord, then love of neighbor.

The way of unity in Christ is challenging because the commandments are balanced with the beatitudes. Living as a Christian is full of "rules," yet with exceptions to so many of them. This makes most of us uncomfortable because we like controlled environments where we know what to expect. When it comes to desiring unity with God and unity with others, we can't fake it and we can't give up (drawing upon discretion as Jesus told St. Catherine above). Discretion avoids extremes, it unites our love of God with love of neighbor. It seeks to walk the middle way, the way of Jesus. This middle way still has set parameters. We should engage with society around us, but there are boundaries for holy living; which is to say, sin is always to be avoided. The missionary activity of our families and churches should draw others in by being a consistent light on a straight path, not a spinning ship attempting every fad to be likable. Going after the lost sheep in the name of unity gets messy when the wolves are there. Thankfully, God gives us rational minds and compassionate hearts to manage the different situations that come up (See Matthew 10).

As we seek unity and begin to utilize discretion, we are keenly aware of the need for bringing people back together from the "opposite poles" into right relationship with the Lord. The answer to unity from the perspective of discretion is: lean into mercy as you invite others to walk in the Light of Truth.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of discretion needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! –Psalm 133:1 (NRSVCE)

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. –Philippians 2:1-2 (NRSVCE)

**-Our Father-
-Glory Be-**

Unity Novena Day 2: Trust

CCC 1818: The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

CCC 1819: Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice. "Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations."

CCC 313: "We know that in everything God works for good for those who love him." (Romans 8:28) The constant witness of the saints confirms this truth: St. Catherine of Siena said to "those who are scandalized and rebel against what happens to them": "Everything comes from love, all is ordained for the salvation of man, God does nothing without this goal in mind." (St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue On Providence*, ch. IV, 138)

Unity needs trust because we cannot be skeptical about the Goodness of God. It was self-loving fear-of-missing-out that caused Adam and Eve's disobedience, which led to all of creation falling out of union with God. Distrust leads to filling the God shaped 'hole in our heart' with things that are fleeting. Even if we can acknowledge God wills our good, many of us are overly afraid of missing it because we don't trust His timing. Two of the biggest distractions in our modern culture today are fear of missing out and fear of something better coming along. If we seek reunion with God, we cannot distrust Him.

We may also explain disunity because we have been hurt by people and we don't want to be ever again. Fear inhibits unity as we put up interior walls, and the purpose of walls is to divide or protect. We don't trust that our needs will be met by other people (which leads to the fractured belief that God won't meet our needs either), so we avoid vulnerable relationships. If we want our families to be unified, we must be honest with each other about the ways we are hurting. We have to humbly reveal our deepest needs in relationships; forgiveness, quality time together, open communication, respect of our dignity, and help in our suffering. We also have to prove trustworthy by being open to those same needs of others.

The hardest hit to trust comes with the sin of despair. We may be tempted with feelings of desolation, when the Lord permits suffering to come our way or even just when we find dryness in our prayer. This is why we need hope; we need to trust that God wills our good even if we don't feel it anymore. The evil one plays in our fears. He manipulates our feelings to control our core beliefs, he fractures our unity. Love drives out fear, God is love. As we seek unity, we must keep this in the front of our minds, and share this truth with others. The answer to unity from the perspective of trust is: we must love freely from a place that trusts God always wills our good.

(Because it is true we cannot enable people to abuse others, so certain protective "walls" may be needed as we still live in a fallen world. This is why the virtue of discretion was discussed first in our novena.)

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of trust needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 3: Humility

“He who has no thirst will not persevere, for either fatigue causes him to stop, or pleasure, and he does not care to carry the vessel with which he may get the water, and neither does he care for the company, and alone he cannot go, and he turns back at the smallest prick of persecution, for he loves it not. He is afraid because he is alone; were he accompanied he would not fear, and had he ascended the three steps he would not have been alone, and would, therefore, have been secure. You must then have thirst and gather yourselves together, as it is said, 'two or three or more.' Why is it said 'two or three or more'? Because there are not two without three, nor three without two, neither three nor two without more. The number one is excluded, for, unless a man has a companion, I cannot be in the midst; this is no indifferent trifle, for he who is wrapped up in self-love is solitary.” – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

CCC 2559: "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God." (St. John Damascene) But when we pray, do we speak from the height of our pride and will, or "out of the depths" of a humble and contrite heart? (3 Ps 130:1) He who humbles himself will be exalted; (Cf. Luke 18:9-14) humility is the foundation of prayer, Only when we humbly acknowledge that "we do not know how to pray as we ought," (Romans 8:26) are we ready to receive freely the gift of prayer. "Man is a beggar before God." (St. Augustine)

The reason humility is needed for unity is so multifaceted we cannot explore them all in such a short meditation. Focusing on the instruction from Jesus to St. Catherine we read above, we have to admit we need other people for our pursuit of holiness. Jesus gave us the beautiful reality that where two or three are gathered, there He is. Isn't the point of desiring unity, wanting people to come together? Yet how often we are the very cause of division with our pride. The unity of the Body of Christ, in analogy, means that the arm carries while the leg walks. The arm doesn't desire to walk out of fear the leg won't do its job. It just carries, and the leg walks. The Lord created us with a specific purpose, and we must use the humble and contrite heart within us to pray for such a revelation to bring forth that purpose, and we ask for the grace to virtuously pursue it. We even need humility for such a prayer!

Taking the Catechism paragraph above, let us examine our desire for unity. Is this a prayer from the height of our pride? If we are going to pursue unity in our families and marriages, the priesthood and the workplace, we must strive for purified intentions. We must not lose sight of the fact that unity actually requires we die to our preconceived notions of how we'll get there. We have to humbly seek the Lord's way. Even in Heaven there will be unity without uniformity. We take note of this in the choirs of angels that are united in praise of God, but yet with different roles. Saints who lived vastly different, yet all holy, lives.

Unity requires compromise with other humans, acknowledging the holy space carved out for others' uniqueness as they strive to fulfill their purpose as well. The answer to unity, from the perspective of humility is: avoid a solitary opinion as you surrender your weaknesses to be covered with the strengths of those God has given you to work with.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of humility needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 4: Obedience

"[...] so I tell you that disobedience comes from pride, which issues from self-love depriving the soul of humility. The sister given by self-love to disobedience is impatience, and pride, her foster-mother, feeds her with the darkness of infidelity, so she hastens along the way of darkness, which leads her to eternal death." – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

CCC 1898: Every human community needs an authority to govern it. (Cf. Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*) The foundation of such authority lies in human nature. It is necessary for the unity of the state. Its role is to ensure as far as possible the common good of the society.

CCC 1903 Authority is exercised legitimately only when it seeks the common good of the group concerned and if it employs morally licit means to attain it. If rulers were to enact unjust laws or take measures contrary to the moral order, such arrangements would not be binding in conscience. In such a case, "authority breaks down completely and results in shameful abuse." (St. John XXIII *Pacem in Terris* 51)

There are several passages in the Catechism about the common good. For those seeking unity, grappling with the common good is necessary. It factors into all the virtues we are striving to grow in, as well as directing our laws and societal decisions. Once these are made, obedience to the leaders entrusted to us by God will provide us the avenue for holy living. It honestly removes some of the burden from our souls when our days are done. There is a call from Christ Himself to follow the Good Shepherd. Our obedience to the authority of the Catholic Church is necessary for unity. We know all people are sinful, even our priest, bishop, and pope. But the Church, as something bigger than just the sinful humans in leadership positions, is guided by the Holy Spirit and this is why we seek unity within Her. Founded by Jesus Christ Himself, the Catholic Church desires the common good.

God rewards obedience and humility but not self-righteousness and self-reliance. When we arrive at our final judgment, we may be asked, "Did you obey my Word and His steward?" But surely we don't want to hear: "You spread seeds of discord and disunity?" or "You spoke disrespectfully against my son, pope N. and the Church, and led the faithful away from unity in Her." Within the united pursuit of holiness by us all, we can trust that the necessary changes in non-dogmatic things will be made through the Holy Spirit's promptings.

We may view prayer and fasting as inaction, but it's the way of Christ. He flipped tables once, but he prayed and fasted throughout all of His public ministry. Action must always follow prayer and fasting. We are free to share our well-formed opinions and, of course, should share the prophetic messages the Lord reveals to us in prayer—but out of obedience we must be willing to be patient for change to take place.

A great scripture passage about obedience and unity is when Jesus was asleep in the storm and the disciples woke Him for help. It may look like God is "asleep" in our world today, we get anxious about making things happen, but we must wait for His Voice to calm the storms. After the trial of learning to stay on the boat with the leader, we find the peace and calm of unity. The answer to unity within obedience is: with patience, our obedience in faith will prove unitive.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of obedience needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 5: Gratitude

CCC 827 "Christ, 'holy, innocent, and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." (*Lumen Gentium* 8 § 3) All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. (See 1 John 1:8-10) In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time. (See Matthew 13:24-30) Hence the Church gathers sinners already caught up in Christ's salvation but still on the way to holiness: "The Church is therefore holy, though having sinners in her midst, because she herself has no other life but the life of grace. If they live her life, her members are sanctified; if they move away from her life, they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she suffers and does penance for those offenses, of which she has the power to free her children through the blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit." – St. Paul VI

"But if she were grateful for the benefits she has received, she would know Me, and knowing Me would know herself, and so would remain in My love: but she, as if blind, goes groping down the river, and she does not see that the water does not support her."— Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

Gratitude correlates with humility because, through it, we acknowledge we are not entitled to any of the goodness God pours into our lives. Truly "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (James 1:17). We live gratitude as we acknowledge we did nothing to deserve salvation—we did nothing to deserve Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross.

Humanity is united in our "lack of worthiness" to receive the Lord. In His great goodness, however, Jesus left us opportunities, especially the Eucharist, to grow in communion with Him and those around us. We are able to be a part of the Universal Church through the offering up of our sufferings for others' souls, not just our own. The Eucharistic sacrifice is unifying with the church militant on Earth, unifying of our prayers for the church suffering in purgatory, and unifying in receiving the intercession of the church triumphant in heaven. The Communion of Saints is the highest example we should follow in our pursuit of unity, and for this we are grateful.

Just as Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples, he also sends us the Holy Spirit as a gift to enable us to break the bonds of sin. We hinder receiving the fullness of the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in our lives if we don't stay close to God through prayer, and remaining in a state of grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. For this unitive gift, we are grateful.

By strengthening our practice of gratitude we will more perfectly obey the commandment to "love your neighbor." Loving our neighbor as ourselves really does require gratitude for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them. May we persist in unitive gratitude through reception of the Eucharist, Reconciliation, and in sharing God's blessings with those around us. The pursuit of unity within gratitude is: acknowledging none of us are entitled to God's goodness.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of gratitude needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 6: Solidarity

“Eternal Goodness, you want me to gaze into you and see that you love me gratuitously, so that I may love everyone with the very same love. You want me, then, to love and serve my neighbors gratuitously, by helping them spiritually and materially as much as I can...” – From “Prayer 12” by St. Catherine of Siena

CCC 1818: The principle of solidarity, also articulated in terms of "friendship" or "social charity," is a direct demand of human and Christian brotherhood.

CCC 1937: These differences belong to God's plan, who wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular "talents" share the benefits with those who need them. These differences encourage and often oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness, and sharing of goods; they foster the mutual enrichment of cultures: “I distribute the virtues quite diversely; I do not give all of them to each person, but some to one, some to others. [...] I shall give principally charity to one; justice to another; humility to this one, a living faith to that one. [...] And so I have given many gifts and graces, both spiritual and temporal, with such diversity that I have not given everything to one single person, so that you may be constrained to practice charity towards one another. [...] I have willed that one should need another and that all should be my ministers in distributing the graces and gifts they have received from me.” (Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*)

CCC 1942: “The virtue of solidarity goes beyond material goods. In spreading the spiritual goods of the faith, the Church has promoted, and often opened new paths for, the development of temporal goods as well. And so throughout the centuries has the Lord's saying been verified: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well" (Matthew 6:33).

Solidarity is commonly defined as “unity or agreement of feeling or action, especially among individuals with a common interest; mutual support within a group.” It seems to be interchangeable with the word unity. While solidarity is used in modern political and ideological conversations to indicate supporting people in oppression or hardship, it transcends those human ideas into the deepest solidarity, that of unity with the Triune God. As we’ve meditated upon already this week, we know that suffering is where we find our human unity with the divinity of Christ. To love God more perfectly in the suffering of this world, we need the graces of the sacraments and deep interior life. We strive first for spiritual unity, and work to provide the spiritual support of others. If we do that for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we will then encourage their material welfare as we read in CCC 1942.

We need solidarity with each other so that when one of us is down, we can lift the other up. We will all struggle as we are spiritually attacked, and this is where the solidarity of the Body of Christ is so needed. The devil prowls around like a lion looking to devour us, he goes after the isolated, with solidarity, we are able to resist him better. The answer to unity within solidarity is: together we are stronger.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of solidarity needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 7: Humility

CCC 1829: The fruits of charity are joy, peace, and mercy; charity demands beneficence and fraternal correction; it is benevolence; it fosters reciprocity and remains disinterested and generous; it is friendship and communion: Love is itself the fulfillment of all our works. There is the goal; that is why we run: we run toward it, and once we reach it, in it we shall find rest. (St. Augustine)

CCC 815: What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony."

(Colossians 3:14) But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
 - common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
 - apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family.
- (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2; *Lumen Gentium* 14; Code of Canon law 205)

"The soul cannot live without love, but always wants to love something, because she is made of love, and, by love, I created her. And therefore I told you that the affection moved the intellect, saying, as it were, 'I will love, because the food on which I feed is love.' [...] In the dignity of her being it tastes My inestimable goodness, and the charity with which I created her, and, in contemplating her misery, it discovers and tastes My mercy, and sees how, through mercy, I have lent her time and drawn her out of darkness. – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

Love is willing the good of another, the greatest of which is unity with God for eternity. Charity is 'natural' when we strive to love our neighbor virtuously, whereas 'supernatural' charity is divinely infused. We could think of it as a habit versus a gift. The best attempt we imperfect humans can make at pure love is our striving toward unity. The Catechism declares that charity is communion, it binds everything together. It's the driving force behind our desire to have united marriages, united families, united presbyterates, united communities and churches. The problem has become a conflating attitude between love and tolerance, with pride and vanity driving erroneous sentiments that confuse undirected souls to think acceptance equals love. Charity is grounded in the Truth that God exists, we owe Him love, and the good person desires all to be saved from Hell.

Unity will never be reached without some disagreements, as all of us grapple with difference in opinion and methods. We know that fraternal connection is necessary, but never from a prideful place. Maintaining a 'charitable interpretation' mindset will steer us toward that peace we seek, it will enable us to show mercy, and it will keep us in the joy of Christ as we call upon the other virtues to be patient and humble. This pulls in what Jesus said to St. Catherine, the mercy we have been shown includes the fact that on earth we have time. We have time to keep trying to 'get it right.' We have time to grow in charity and to live out the call to unity.

The answer to unity within charity is: to obtain Heaven for ourselves, we cannot have ill-will toward anyone.

For more on charity and unity, friendship and apostolate, this article is great: <https://stjosemaria.org/living-for-others/>

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of charity needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 8: Justice

CCC 1807: Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor." (Leviticus 19:15) "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (Colossians 4:1)

"Therefore I give My servants hunger and desire for My honor, and the salvation of souls, so that, constrained by their tears, I may mitigate the fury of My divine justice. Take, therefore, your tears and your sweat, drawn from the fountain of My divine love, and, with them, wash the face of My spouse. I promise you, that, by this means, her beauty will be restored to her, not by the knife nor by cruelty, but peacefully, by humble and continued prayer, by the sweat and the tears shed by the fiery desire of My servants, and thus will I fulfill your desire if you, on your part, endure much, casting the light of your patience into the darkness of perverse man, not fearing the world's persecutions, for I will protect you, and My Providence shall never fail you in the slightest need." – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

It's philosophically mysterious that God chose to give us our free will, but justice toward Him is to use that freedom to choose Him. Aquinas discusses this as the virtue of religion, but we will not outline that here for brevity's sake. The justice owed to us for our sinful nature is hell, but thanks be to the all-loving nature of God, His mercy mitigates His fury. We bring Him glory for this as we live a life of virtue and prayer.

All of humanity must work together to bring the disorder of fallen creation back into unity. The things we have were meant to be shared in various ways appropriate to the circumstances. Being selfish with material goods, time, talents, and spiritual gifts oppose justice. Everything we have is from Him and for Him. All we claim as our own is our sin. This is why unity needs justice. When we look around us, we see sinners. When we look in the mirror, we see a sinner. We owe each other a life of excellence, a life of virtue that doesn't trample on another's pursuit of holiness. Living for His glory is just: fair, kind, and respectful of each person's dignity as a human person. We must also be good stewards of all creation. We must learn to do good (Isaiah 1:17)

If justice is giving others what they are due, it leaves space for them to choose God freely, giving them the best witness we can as to why they should. God's perfect mercy never damns someone to hell, he or she chooses it for themselves. His mercy and grace are free gifts, accessible ordinarily through the sacraments and extraordinarily in the countless ways the Lord may act otherwise. Jesus promised St. Catherine that beauty will be restored not by cruelty (opposition of justice), but by prayerfully offering our work and sufferings in union with Him. The answer to unity within justice is: living a just life is the best encouragement we can give to others to seek God.

If you'd like to read the Summa for Aquinas' discourse on religion as a virtue, this link has the online version: <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3081.htm>

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-Our Father-

-Glory Be-

Unity Novena Day 9: Detachment

“Unite yourself always to Me by the affection of love, for I am the Supreme and Eternal Purity. I am that Fire which purifies the soul, and the closer the soul is to Me, the purer she becomes, and the further she is from Me, the more does her purity leave her; which is the reason why men of the world fall into such iniquities, for they are separated from Me, while the soul, who, without any medium, unites herself directly to Me, participates in My Purity.” – Jesus to St. Catherine of Siena in *The Dialogue*

CCC 1721: God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life. (2 Peter 1:4) With beatitude, man enters into the glory of Christ (cf. Romans 8:18) and into the joy of the Trinitarian life.

CCC 1723 The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement - however beneficial it may be - such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love[...]

CCC 2548: Desire for true happiness frees man from his immoderate attachment to the goods of this world so that he can find his fulfillment in the vision and beatitude of God. "The promise [of seeing God] surpasses all beatitude. [...] In Scripture, to see is to possess. [...] Whoever sees God has obtained all the goods of which he can conceive." (St. Gregory)

The virtue of detachment enables us to seek unity because we don't have a tight grip on desires for power, control, money, or belongings (all things that can divide us into have and have not if they are not directed toward God's Will). The Catechism 1723 connects detachment with living a life of following the beatitudes, and 1721 tells us that beatitudes are the way to enter into unity with the Blessed Trinity. The more attachments we have, the greater the pruning must be in this life and/or in purgatory.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8). To be pure in heart, we must have a single priority in life toward union with God. We can't have unity in our families if we are attached to our phone; it serves as a distraction from those with whom God has blessed us. We can't have unity within our marriage if we are attached to a mental tab of who last started a load of laundry; it serves as a source of resentment. We can't have unity in our parish if we are attached to being the one who sits in the inner left fourth pew; it is inhospitable; nor if we are attached to a role in ministry; it's self-serving. We must step back and reflect on the ways we are attached to keeping score, feeling scorned, or divided over differences.

We must foster a prayer life, this is our attachment; Adoration, Confession, and reception of Holy Communion. From that purity in heart, we will see God. Not only will the pure in heart see God, but others who see people with pure hearts can see God working through them. The answer to unity within detachment is: diligently pushing out distractions so we magnify the Lord.

O God, You created us in Your image for cooperation with Your Holy Will, as a reflection of love shone forth in Your Blessed Trinity. Despite our failings, you continue to love and care for us. We are so grateful for this. Please hear our prayers now and grant us the virtue of detachment needed for unity, that we may more perfectly bring You glory. As we are united in our suffering and sinfulness, may we also be united in our response to Your grace. We pray for unity in our Church, in our community, in our family, in sacramental marriages, in vocations, and in our own heart, mind, and soul. Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, Amen.

**-Our Father-
-Glory Be-**