

JUSTICE, MERCY AND THE SACRED HEART

The Perfections of God

God possesses all perfections to an infinite degree. In fact, we should say that He *is* every perfection: Goodness, Power, Love and all other perfections. Among these other perfections are Justice and Mercy. Justice and Mercy are perfections which are often misunderstood today because they appear to many as being contradictory perfections when applied to God.

Sometimes we hear from the liberals: **“If there was a God, then He would be infinitely merciful and so would forgive even the greatest sinner. Hell, therefore, if it exists, must be empty.”**

Conversely, we hear from admittedly rarer modern-day Pharisees: **“If God was just, then he would damn all sinners. It is only the perfect that are saved.”**

In the first case, God’s mercy would be at the expense of His justice; in the second case, His justice would be at the expense of His mercy. But justice and mercy are not contradictory perfections in God, they are beautifully and harmoniously intertwined.

The Nature of Justice

Justice is the rendering what is due to another. There are three sorts of justice: legal justice, commutative justice and distributive justice.

Legal justice concerns what is due

by the individual to the community. God manifests His legal justice by being the source of order that leads man to God. This order is concretely manifest in the Natural Law .

Commutative justice concerns what is due between individuals as equals. Buying and selling, giving and receiving, lending and borrowing give rise to obligations of commutative justice. Now, as a creature is not equal to His Creator, no one has any rights before God and so God does not owe anything to anyone. Therefore, we cannot attribute commutative justice to God.

Finally, distributive justice concerns what is due by the community to the individual. God manifests His distributive justice in two ways: First by giving to all creatures the means they require to achieve the end for which they have been created (i.e. natural and supernatural grace). And second by rewarding the good and punishing the evil.

The Nature of Mercy

Mercy in God is the act whereby God alleviates the suffering of His creatures.

God’s mercy is magnificently shown in the Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Son of God. He assumed a human nature so that He could have compassion on fallen man and suffer and die to atone for his sins and then prepare a place for him in heaven.

“He became man so that man could become God,” says St. Augustine (i.e. so that man could be sanctified by grace).

Non-contradiction between Justice & Mercy

“All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth to those that seek after His covenant (i.e His justice) and His testimonies.” (Ps.84:11)

Far from being contradictory attributes of God, God’s justice is entirely routed in His mercy. The bestowing of a superabundance of means upon man so that He might attain his end goes beyond justice to be an act of great mercy. The rewarding of the good goes beyond justice for God rewards us beyond our merits. And the punishing of evil is never according to our just deserts for, in His mercy, God remits our sins. But he is nevertheless just for He demands repentance and atonement before doing so.

Resolution in the devotion to the Sacred Heart

The harmonious association of God’s justice and mercy is most wonderfully shown forth in the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The heart is the organ of love in every language, for its use in language is founded on physical reality: when we love, when we see a loved one suffer, when our own love is scorned, our heart is really affected. The devotion to the Most Sacred

The Sacred Heart of Jesus

Heart of Jesus, therefore, is the devotion to that symbol of the ultimate goodness of God which is His love.

This is a love which is full of merciful compassion because it assumed a human nature, a human heart; it is a love which appeases justice by suffering a pierced heart; it is a love that in mercy and justice pours upon mankind a superabundance of graces through a heart gushing forth blood and water; and it is a love that implores a repentance and atonement in justice on the part of us poor sinners (even though never as much as we deserve).

The devotion to the Sacred Heart was made known in a series of communications to St. Margaret Mary Allacoque, a Visitation nun at Paray-le-Monial in 1673. The principal ways of practicing this devotion are to enthrone the Sacred Heart in your home, to make a novena to the Sacred Heart during the month of June, and, if you do not have too many prayers at the end of your family rosary, to make a short daily act of consecration to the Sacred Heart. By doing so, you will be made participants in the twin perfections of God's justice and His mercy. Ω



PRAYER OF THE HANDMAIDS OF THE EUCHARIST Requested by Our Lady of Akita on 6th July 1973

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, truly present in Holy Eucharist, I consecrate my body and soul to be entirely one with Thy Heart, being sacrificed at every instant on all the altars of the world and giving praise to the Father pleading for the coming of His Kingdom.

Please receive this humble offering of myself. Use me as Thou wilt for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls.

Most holy Mother of God, never let me be separated from thy Divine Son. Please defend and protect me as thy special child. Amen.