

Catholic Social Teaching: Love



Fratelli Tutti

“The spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love. Yet some believers think that it consists in the imposition of their own ideologies upon everyone else, or in a violent defence of the truth, or in impressive demonstrations of strength. All of us, as believers, need to recognize that love takes first place: love must never be put at risk, and the greatest danger lies in failing to love.”

- Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (2020).

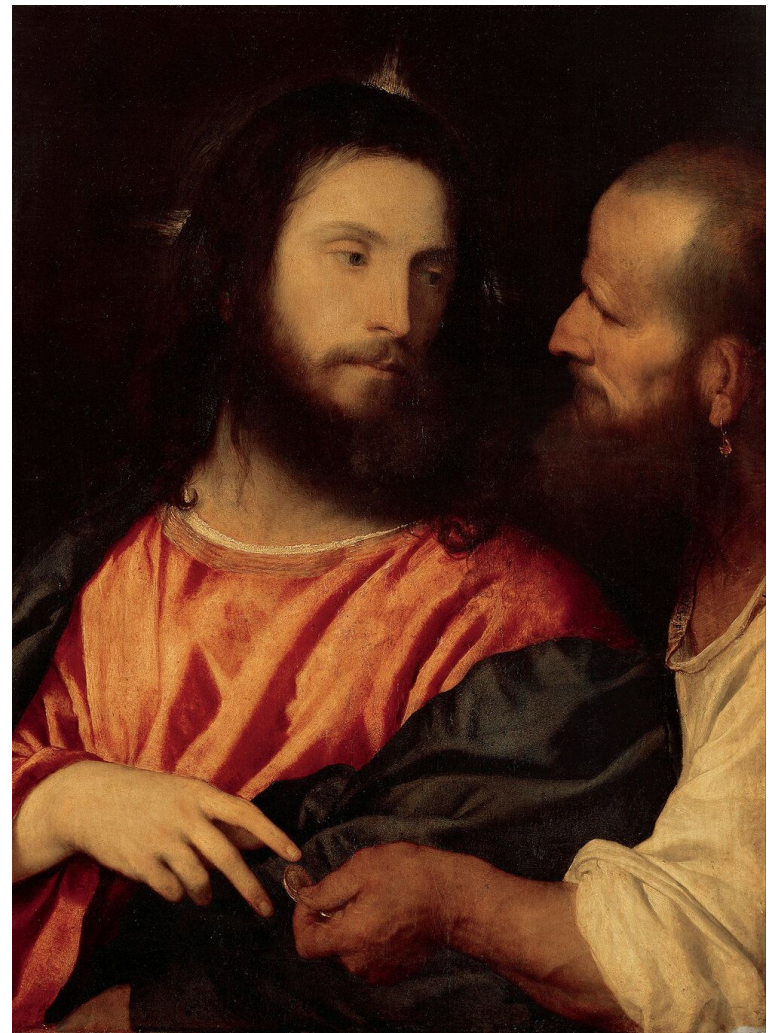


The Greatest Commandment

The Pharisees got together and one of them, an expert in the law, tested Christ with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

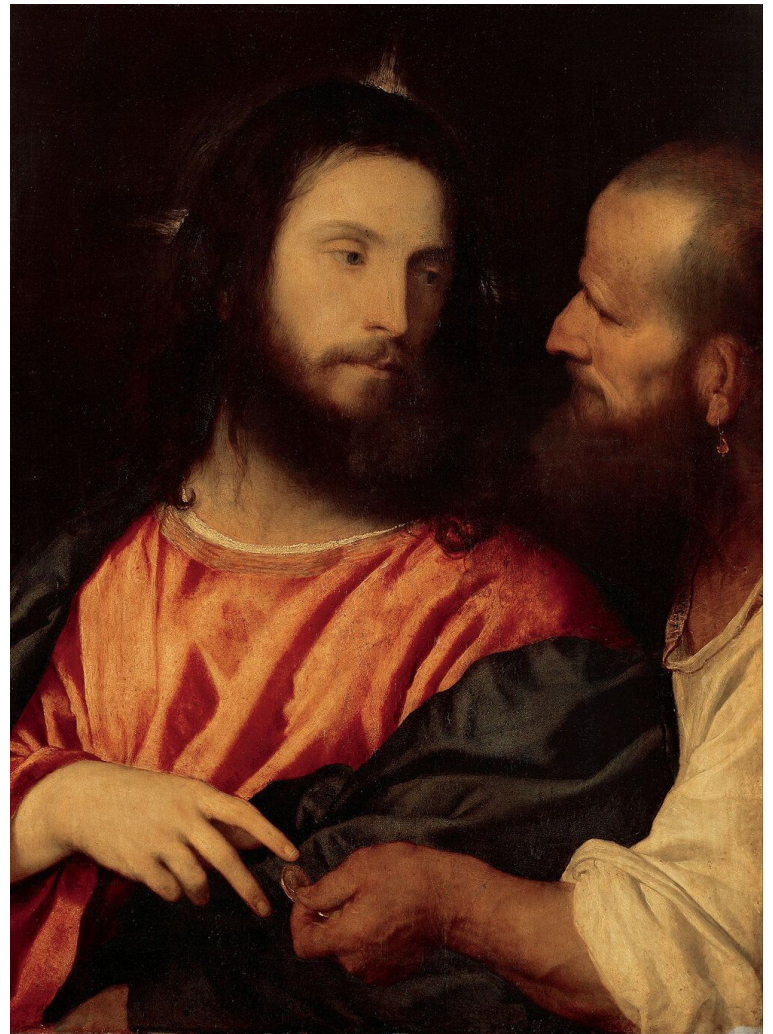
- Matthew 22.



St Paul on Love

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

- 1 Corinthians 13.



CS Lewis

“*Storge* - the affection especially of parents to offspring and of offspring to parents - is the humblest and most widely diffused of loves, the love in which our experience seems to differ least from that of the animals. Let me add at once that I do not on that account give it a lower value. Nothing in Man is either worse or better for being shared with the beasts.”

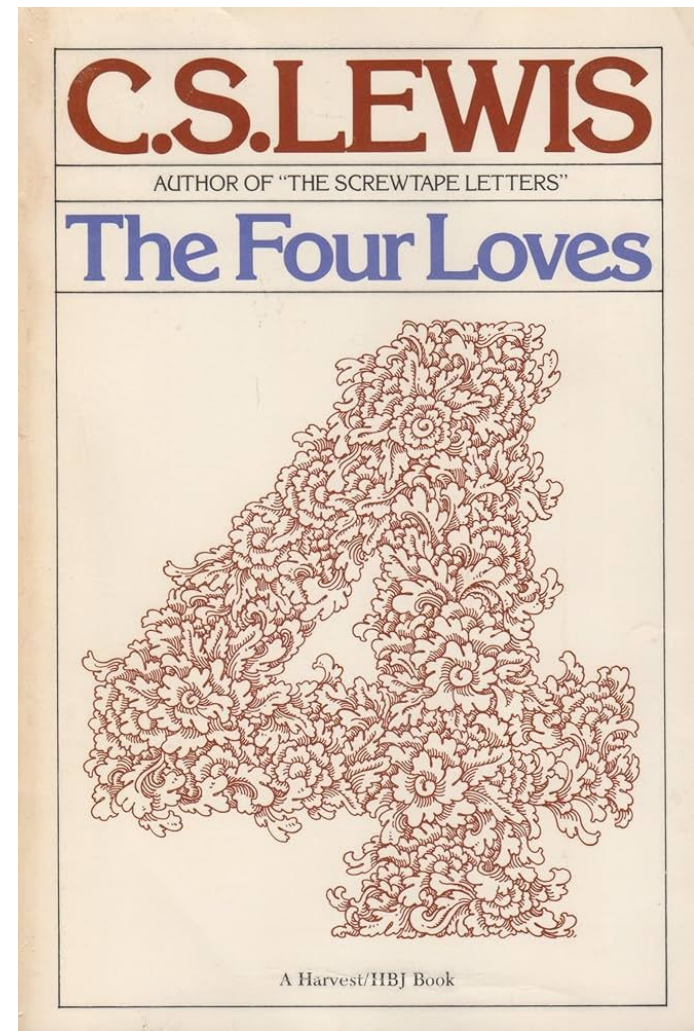
- C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves* (1960).



CS Lewis

“*Philia* is in a sense not at all derogatory to it the least natural of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. It has least commerce with our nerves; there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale. It is essentially between individuals; the moment two men are friends they have in some degree drawn apart together from the herd.”

- C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves* (1960).



CS Lewis

By *Eros* I mean of course that state which we call "being in love"; or, if you prefer, that Mnd of love which lovers are "in."

- C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves* (1960).



CS Lewis

“This highest love, *Agapē*, is Gift-love. In God there is no hunger that needs to be filled, only plenteousness that desires to give. The doctrine that God was under no necessity to create is not a piece of dry scholastic speculation. It is essential.”

- C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves* (1960).



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“The nature of God’s will can only be made clear in the moment of action.”

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Josef Fuchs

“The free self-commitment of ourselves as persons is more than any particular action or actions and more than the sum of them; it underlies them, permeates them, and goes beyond them, without ever being actually one of them.”

- Pontifical Commission on Birth Control – Final Report (1966)



Josef Fuchs

“In fulfillment of its mission the Church must propose obligatory norms of human and Christian life from the deposit of faith in an open dialogue with the world. But since moral obligations can never be detailed in all their concrete particularities, the personal responsibility of each individual must always be called into play. This is even clearer today because of the complexity of modern life: the concrete moral norms to be followed must not be pushed to an extreme.”

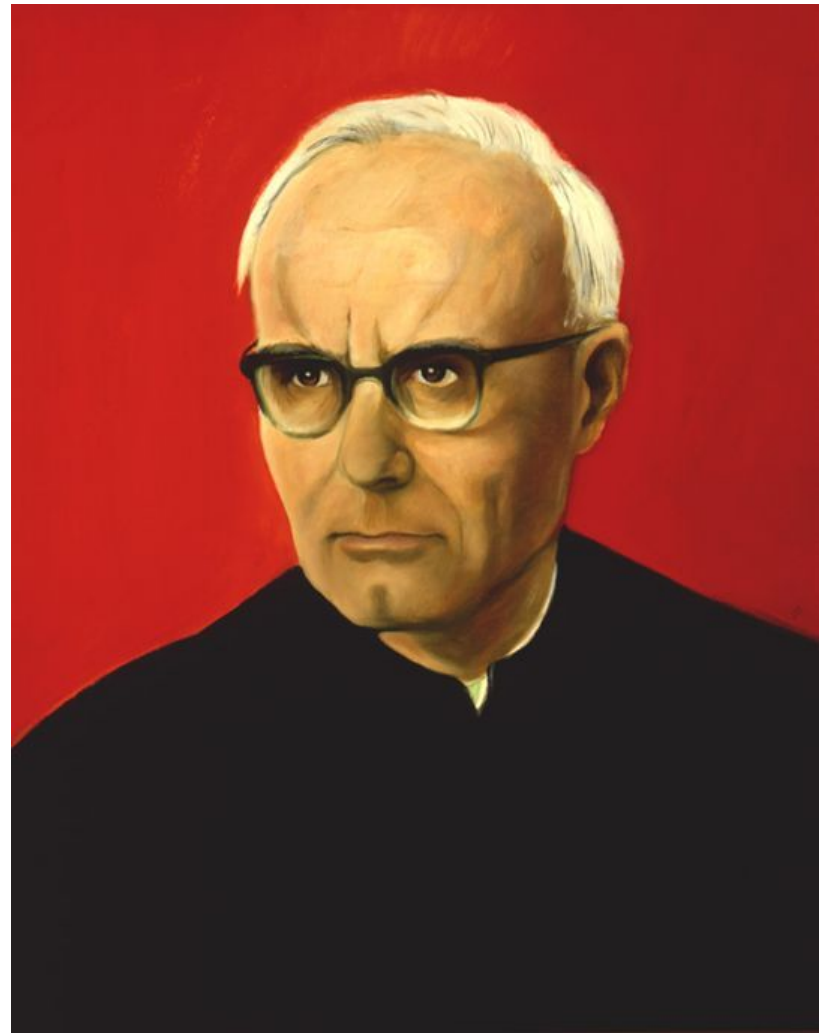
- Pontifical Commission on Birth Control – Final Report (1966)



'The Fundamental Option'

"The human person is unthematically conscious of himself as a whole, as free, and as an undetermined being. He is also unthematically aware of God as the ultimate horizon of knowing, willing and loving. Conscious of this awareness, the human person cannot avoid engaging his basic freedom and disposing of himself as a whole either by accepting God in love or by refusing God."

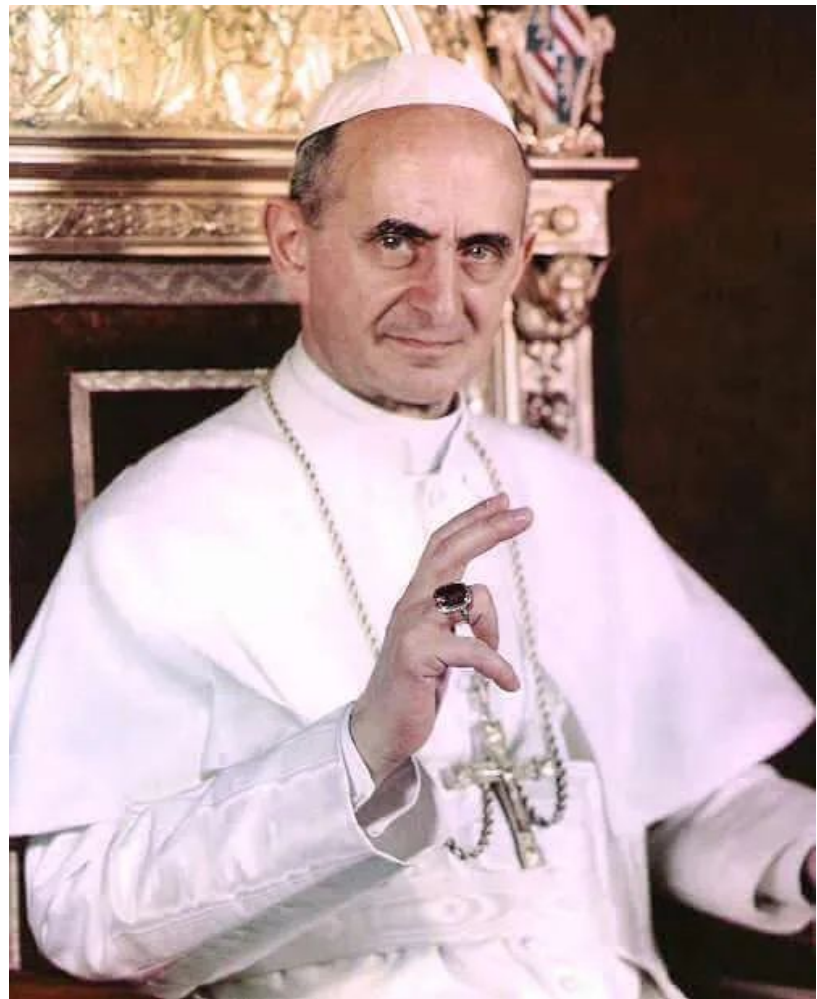
- Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*.



‘Social Love’

“Human society is sorely ill. The cause is not so much the depletion of natural resources, nor their monopolistic control by a privileged few; it is rather the weakening of brotherly ties between individuals and nations... If every citizen—be he a government leader, a public official, or a simple workman—is motivated by brotherly love and is truly anxious to build one universal human civilization that spans the globe, then we shall see the start of a dialogue on man rather than on the products of the soil or of technology.”

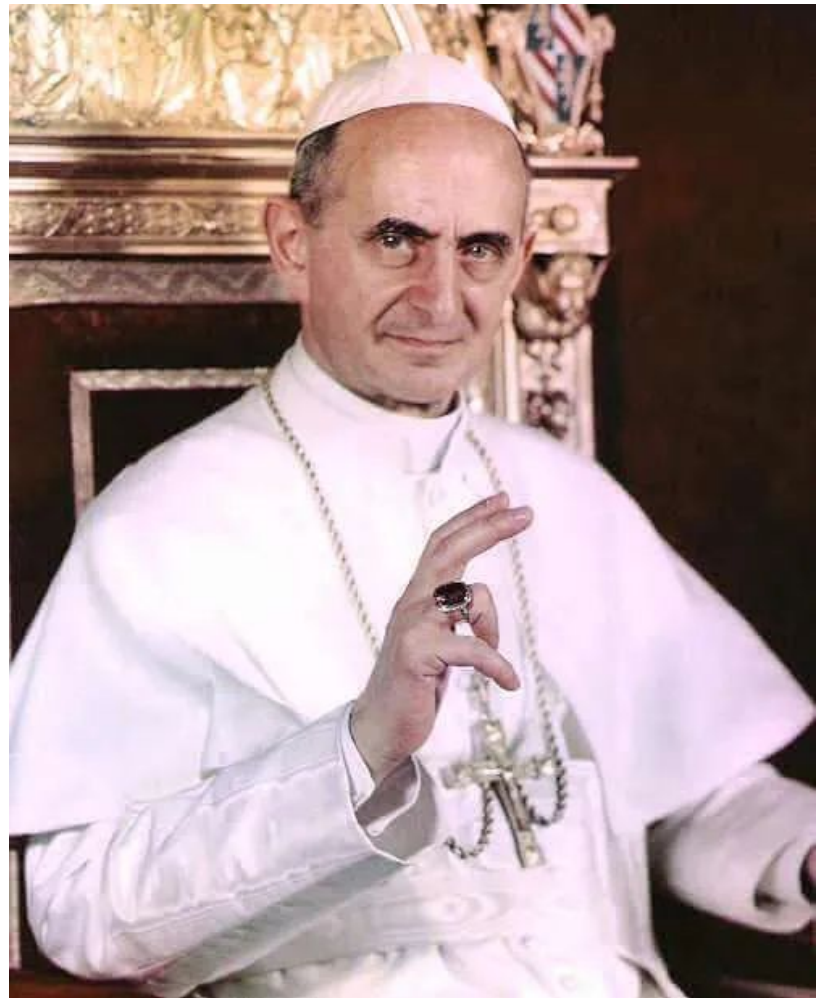
- Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967).



‘Social Love’

“If development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship.”

- Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* (1967).



‘A Civilisation of Love’

“Personal behaviour is fully human when it is born of love, manifests love and is ordered to love. This truth also applies in the social sphere; Christians must be deeply convinced witnesses of this, and they are to show by their lives how love is the only force that can lead to personal and social perfection, allowing society to make progress towards the good.”

- Renato Martino, *Compendium of the Social Doctrines of the Church* (2004).



‘A Civilisation of Love’

“Social love is the antithesis of egoism and individualism. Without absolutizing social life, as happens with short-sighted perspectives limiting themselves to sociological interpretations, it must not be forgotten that the integral development of the person and social growth mutually influence each other. Selfishness, therefore, is the most insidious enemy of an ordered society. History shows how hearts are devastated when men and women are incapable of recognizing other values or other effective realities apart from material goods, the obsessive quest for which suffocates and blocks their ability to give of themselves.”

- Renato Martino, *Compendium of the Social Doctrines of the Church* (2004).



‘The Evil of Charity’

“The people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good; we should restrain our altruistic impulses of charity, benevolence, and the like on the ground that such charity degrades and demoralises. Charity creates a multitude of sins. It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property. It is both immoral and unfair.”

- Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*.



'The Necessity of Charity'

"Since the nineteenth century, an objection has been raised to the Church's charitable activity, subsequently developed with particular insistence by Marxism: the poor, it is claimed, do not need charity but justice.... There is admittedly some truth to this argument, but also much that is mistaken... Love—caritas—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love. Whoever wants to eliminate love is preparing to eliminate man as such... There will always be situations of material need where help in the form of concrete love of neighbour is indispensable. The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern."

- Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*.



Love and AI

“In this age of artificial intelligence, we cannot forget that poetry and love are necessary to save our humanity. No algorithm will ever be able to capture, for example, the nostalgia that all of us feel, whatever our age, and wherever we live, when we recall how we first used a fork to seal the edges of the pies that we helped our mothers or grandmothers to make at home. It was a moment of culinary apprenticeship, somewhere between child-play and adulthood, when we first felt responsible for working and helping one another. Along with the fork, I could also mention thousands of other little things that are a precious part of everyone’s life: a smile we elicited by telling a joke, a picture we sketched in the light of a window, the first game of soccer we played with a rag ball, the worms we collected in a shoebox, a flower we pressed in the pages of a book, our concern for a fledgling bird fallen from its nest, a wish we made in plucking a daisy. All these little things, ordinary in themselves yet extraordinary for us, can never be captured by algorithms. The fork, the joke, the window, the ball, the shoebox, the book, the bird, the flower: all of these live on as precious memories “kept” deep in our heart.”

- Pope Francis, *Dilexit Nos* (2024).



Questions

1. What are the four varieties of love according to C.S. Lewis?
2. Do you agree that agapē is the highest form of love?
3. Is an action good if it has good consequences, even if it is not motivated by love?
4. Is any action permitted, so long as it is motivated by love?
5. Does the principle of love provide practical solutions to our current social and political problems?
6. Is charity a force for good or ill?
7. What is the difference between a just society and a loving society?
8. Is our current society more or less loving than in the past?