

## An Outline of Justice and Allied Virtues

I. Justice in general is the rightful relationships among people.

A. Fairness is the aspect of justice that rewards good and punishes evil. However, justice goes beyond that, showing kindness and mercy even when strict fairness does not demand it.

B. Mercy above all is overcoming the effects of sins, e.g., by the forgiveness of sins or works of mercy. As the parable of the prodigal son indicates, mercy is often needed to restore justice.

C. In *Dives et Misericordia*, an encyclical letter on God the Father, Pope John Paul II described the relationship between justice and mercy, saying that "mercy differs from justice, but is not in proposition to it if we admit in the history of mankind - as the Old Testament precisely does - the presence of God, who already as Creator has linked Himself to His creatures with a particular love."

D. Original justice was the primordial order that existed before the fall of man. In Baptism, the state of grace that was the central aspect of original justice is restored, but the damage to that original justice remains to be overcome. The prophets and the Book of Revelations speak of a restoration of that order. See Isaiah 11:1-9; Micah 4:1-4; Revelations 21:22-22:5.

II. Justice has different aspects centering on the same basic idea.

A. The virtue of religion is our rendering unto God the worship and honor He is due.

B. Piety involves giving both our family and those to whom we owe loyalty the reverence they are due. It also involves a delight in giving God the worship He is due.

C. Political justice involves a right relationship between the individual and the community.

D. Commutative justice involves giving people their individual rights, as well as honoring promises and paying a rightful wage and price.

- Courtesy is a part of commutative justice. Generosity builds upon this virtue.

E. Distributive justice involves giving each person a level of well-being (e.g., with reference to wealth, education, respect and honor. The idea is that, even if a person does not do anything specific or have any specific property that calls for rights under commutative justice, they are owed.

F. Some rights (e.g., to a basic education, marriage and level of living) are owed under distributive justice. Other rights (e.g., the right to a government subsidy) are not owed under distributive justice, but once promised are owed under commutative justice.

G. Some rights, e.g., to property and to voice one's views, are natural rights, which should in general be respected, for they are inherently helpful for human nature. However, they are below human rights (e.g., the right to life and to conscience) which always demand respect.

III. Some virtues are allied with justice. While distinct from it, they support the order of justice.

A. Honesty is respecting another's right to the truth and God's right to have His creation described accurately.

- The virtue of honesty avoids either the vice of dishonesty (including slander and "irony," described in the Catechism as caricatures of another person's life or views) and such vices as detraction tale-bearing, and boasting that involve telling truths that should not be told..

B. Observance, or honor, is the recognition due to another person's accomplishments, or even the greatness of a sub-human object (e.g., a picturesque scene.) With faith, we give Mary and the angels and saints the honor they are due. It also involves abiding by the directives of others who have the right to make them.

- The virtue of observance avoids either the vices of disobedience and ignorance and the vice of flattery.

C. Gratitude is giving another the thanks that they are due, along with at least a desire to return the favor.

D. Liberality is a willingness, and even delight in going further than what is owed. The historical emphasis is on money, but

time, attention, and opportunities for honor are also aspects of liberality.

E. Magnanimity is the desire to do great things with one's time and wealth. It involves the willingness to make great sacrifices for other people, the community, or God. St. Thomas Aquinas lists it as a v allied with fortitude, but it also belongs to justice.

F. Friendliness is the desire to treat all people in a kind and courteous fashion. It extends to all people the speech and manners of friendship.

- It avoids either the vice of flattery or of quarreling.

G. Epikeia is the ability to know when the ordinary human made rules do not apply because the situation is so unusual.