

One

Justice and Relationship and God

Justice, as we've seen, is the cardinal virtue that preserves and protects our relationships with others. It's the virtue that causes us to do right by the people in our lives. It enables us to give them what we owe them. But who is the most important person in our lives? Who is the one we owe the most to?

Obviously, it's God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the most important Persons in our lives. God is the one we owe the most to. So being just actually begins with being just to God.

Aquinas calls Justice to God, "The Virtue of Religion," and says it's the most important part of justice.

So what does it mean to be just to God?

Two

What we Owe God

How can we be Equitable toward God? How can we give Him all He's given us?

He's given us our very life, our existence, our salvation, and all our other blessings. So right from the beginning, we can never attain a level of pure justice with God, because we can never repay our massive debt to Him. "Man can never say to God: we are even."²⁶

Nonetheless, we still have an obligation to at least pay back what we can. This means giving God all that we are, our body, soul, and spirit,

and all that we have. It's a matter of justice, or rather, less than justice since we can never do for God what He's done for us.

Still, we need to try to make our little offering to Him in humility. As Our Lord said, "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done only what we were obliged to do.'"

Three

Liturgy: The Primary Act of Justice

When Aquinas discusses the virtue of religion, of justice to God, he says that the chief act of justice is *liturgy*. That may sound strange until we remember that the primary purpose of the mass is to be a sacrifice, an offering up of everything to God. We offer up to Him everything He has given us. We give ourselves, our joys and our sufferings and our lives – all of it symbolized by the bread and the wine and even the financial offering which represents our labor and our worldly security.

But we also offer up to God the greatest thing He has given us: we offer up His Son, Jesus Christ.

Mass is therefore the greatest obligation in justice we have. This is the most just thing any of us ever do, where we try to make ourselves right with God.

So if you're not willing to perform the most basic act of justice there is by participating in the Mass' offering to God, the God to whom you owe everything, then you are failing in the most basic act of justice there is. And spiritually, if you are living a fundamentally unjust life, that's a big, big problem.

Four

Tithing

One facet of striving for justice with God is the practice of tithing. Sadly, this aspect of justice is often lacking from the lives of many believers.

We forget that God is entitled to a portion of our earnings, that our relationship with Him demands a financial offering as well as an offering of every other dimension of our lives.

The word “tithes” literally means “a tenth part,” and practically, it is usually best to give at least ten percent of our income to God, through donations to the Church or to some other holy cause.

Again, this isn’t a question of preference, or “going the extra mile.” We owe this to God. It’s not even justice. After all He’s done for us, it’s the least we can do.

Five

Thanksgiving

During the mass, where we offer everything up to God – including, hopefully, a financial offering – we also have to be sure to offer thanks.

If someone does something really kind and generous for you, and you don’t even acknowledge it by saying thank you, that’s not just a failure in courtesy, it’s a failure in justice.

That’s why the mass is packed with thanksgiving. Because that’s a fundamental aspect of our just return to God.

The very last words of the entire ritual are, “Thanks be to God.” The word “Eucharist” actually means thanksgiving. And when the priest

says, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,” we respond, “It is right and *just*.” And even outside of mass, it’s the practice of being continually grateful to God that will remind us how indebted we are to him.

Only when we realize how profound our debts, how incredibly obliged to God we are, will we be able to joyfully, eagerly work towards paying God back in justice by being his good servants, and His worthy children.