

Faith Sharing/Discussion Questions

Charity

By Virgil Elizondo

These faith sharing/discussion questions accompany *Charity* by Father Virgilio (Virgil) Elizondo. Fr. Elizondo is a scholar and the author of numerous books. He is recognized in the religious and academic world as “The father of U.S. Latino Religious Thought.” His writings on the interplay between culture and religion are widely used in universities around the country. He has published numerous articles, keynote presentations, and special lectures throughout the United States and abroad. In this work Fr. Elizondo, using numerous stories, leads us through a personal reflection on the importance of charity.

AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION—TRULY SUCCESSFUL LIVES

- “Charity . . . is simply love in action.” Reflect on this simple definition. How well does it express my understanding of charity? (Page 13)
- What does it mean to say that a person has a “charitable spirit”? How do the stories on pages 14–19 illustrate having a charitable spirit? (Pages 14–19)
- Charity is not “a casual good deed, but a lifetime of joyfully sharing with others who we are and what we have.” What stories can I tell of people who have lived such joyful lives? (Page 20)

CHAPTER ONE—A SCHOOL OF CHARITY

- What would the world be like if everyone tried to “outdo God in generosity”? (Page 22)
- How is working to change unjust structures an act of charity? (Page 28)
- How do acts of charity help me to “penetrate the deepest recesses” of others to “see the beauty and value” found there? (Page 33)

CHAPTER TWO—LOVE BEGETS LOVE

- If we “become who we are through what we experience, learn, and admire,” what has shaped my life? How has my life been shaped by experience, learning, and other people? (Page 35)
- The story of the last judgment found in Matthew 25 illustrates the importance of loving our neighbor. How are acts of charity ways for us to express our love for God? How are they religious acts? (Page 37)
- “Love is the ability to forgive not because we were not hurt, but because love is greater than any human offense.” Why is forgiveness essential to charity? What is charity in the absence of forgiveness? (Page 39)
- Charity is more than physical acts. Why would proclaiming the Gospel and living the spiritual works of mercy be considered ways of being charitable? (Page 40)
- If charity is a response to the love God has shown us, what does the absence of charity show? (Page 46)

CHAPTER THREE—A PORTRAIT OF LOVE

- How does charity define who I am? (Page 48)
- How open am I to the concept of radical goodness; to not only giving alms to the poor, but also to opening my heart to them as well? (Page 53)
- “True charity is about giving even what we need.” What prevents me from practicing true charity willingly? (Page 58)

CHAPTER FOUR—OBSTACLES TO CHARITY

- What would it mean for me to live like God? (Page 61)
- What feelings do I have for the people to whom I offer charity? What feelings should I have if I am trying to be like God? (Pages 63–70)
- Which of the obstacles mentioned in this chapter have I or do I experience? What can I do to overcome these obstacles?

CHAPTER FIVE—THE FRUIT OF TRUE FREEDOM IS CHARITY

- What in my life fulfills me? What doesn't? (Page 75)
- How much of my happiness is tied to people? To things? (Page 76)
- How am I free or not free to be fully charitable? What binds me? (Page 78)
- How are my acts of Christian charity a response to the love that I have been shown by God? How are they acts of obligation? Acts of pity toward others? (Pages 81–83)

CHAPTER SIX—THE EFFECTS OF CHARITY

- Patience with others is a sign of charity. How patient am I with others who are in need: the poor, homeless, or broken? (Pages 89–91)
- The author writes that generosity also means being willing to share our time and talent with others, being willing to listen to them, and play and pray with them. How willing am I to share myself with others in this way? What prevents me from sharing myself more willingly? (Page 92)
- Reflect on this statement: “True charity requires us to recognize the infinite worth and dignity of every person you meet.” How well do I do this? (Page 95)
- Much more than giving money, charity defines who you are and how you live. How is my life shaped by Christian charity? (Page 100)

CHAPTER SEVEN—JESUS, THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF ALL VIRTUES

- Spend time contemplating on God's love active in your life. What is revealed to me through this contemplation? (Pages 108–112)
- What are some of the ways that I celebrate the love of God in my life? (Pages 114–115)
- What images come to mind when I think of the Christ child in the manger? How do these images lead me to love more deeply? (Page 118)

CHAPTER EIGHT—THE CHALLENGES OF CHARITY

- In what ways am I being called to perfection through Christian charity? (Page 120)
- How has the love of others changed my life? How might my love for others change their lives? (Page 122)

CHAPTER NINE—FORGIVENESS, THE ULTIMATE GIFT OF CHARITY

- What prevents me from forgiving others? What prevents me from accepting forgiveness from others? (Page 130)
- In what ways do I experience God's love by sharing my love with others? (Page 138)