

- There is a chasm that exists between God and man, a chasm that does not occupy a physical space, so to speak, but a separation that really and truly exists because of sin.
- Yet though it's a spiritual rather than a physical chasm, it was not formed by God but by man.
- Indeed, this chasm between God and man was first formed in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve willfully turned away from our Lord in hardness of heart.
- Though made in His image and likeness and perfectly united to God, Adam and Eve still chose – willfully and with complete knowledge – to turn away from God and break their union with Him – and the chasm of separation between God and man was formed.
- And this chasm has been deepened and widened by the personal sins of each and every person who's ever walked the face of the earth, save our Lady..
- Sadly, no matter how good we may be, it's not a chasm we can ever hope to bridge on our own. Our sins have separated us from God in a way that we can never remedy by our own efforts. Yet God does not wish this chasm to remain!
- In His love for us, God has provided the means of remedying our separation from Him in His grace and mercy, which comes to us in the Person of Jesus Christ!
- Even though Jesus has suffered, died, risen from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, He is not absent from us! No, Christ remains with us, despite our obstinate sinfulness.
- Our reading today from the Book of Revelation beautifully reminds us of how God's presence is with us.
- It says: "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them as their God."
- And we believe this as Catholics. We believe that God remains with us, and not just in a symbolic or spiritual way. No, as Catholics we believe that God is really and truly with us in the Eucharist, a gift which is dependent upon the priesthood.
- For these two sacraments: Holy Orders and Holy Communion, are the means by which the chasm between God and man is bridged, and it's by these two sacraments that Christ's presence is maintained in this world.
- For through the priesthood men are ordained and set apart to stand in the place of God, to be His living presence in this world: each priest an *alter Christus* who provides to the Faithful that grace by which alone man can hope to be saved.
- Then in the Eucharist, we who have been baptized receive, through the hands of a priest, not only our Lord's grace, but our Lord's own Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!
- And in both of these sacraments we find the ineffable and inexhaustible love of God, a love so necessary that we are called to imitate it and spread it with one another.
- In our Gospel today, Jesus says: I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
- In other words, our love for others is the proof of our incorporation into the Body of Christ. It's in loving one another that we show ourselves to be true followers of Him Who is Love Incarnate. But love is a tall order.

- Because all genuine charity is rooted in humility, charity can be a difficult virtue to practice. Charity requires that we in some measure overcome pride and sacrifice ourselves; it requires that we think of others before ourselves.
- The good news is that God gives us the grace of charity in the Eucharist! Indeed, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI referred to the Eucharist as the “Sacrament of Charity.”
- He wrote, “Each celebration of the Eucharist makes sacramentally present the gift that the crucified Lord made of his life, for us and for the whole world. In the Eucharist Jesus also makes us witnesses of God’s compassion towards all our brothers and sisters. The Eucharistic mystery thus gives rise to a service of charity towards neighbor” (SC 88).
- So when we worthily receive our Lord in the Eucharist, we are strengthened not only to love God more, but to love one another more, and to be able to show that love in acts of humble service. But receiving Holy Communion isn’t all we must do to be charitable.
- Our charity is rooted in our knowledge of God. The more we know God, the more we will love Him. And the more we love God, the more we will love one another!
- So to practice charity with authenticity, we must pray. For prayer is where we come to know God, and to sense His great love and mercy for us.
- And we must be constant in our prayer. Otherwise we’ll never come to love God as we should, or find the grace to love others as God calls us to love them.
- Unfortunately, sometimes those whom we are called to love are not always loveable! Yet the saints counsel us to strive to entertain good and amiable feelings toward those we find disagreeable, and to look for God within them when serving them.
- Moreover, the great saint of meekness and charity, St. Francis de Sales, said: *“The maxim of the saints was that in performing works of charity and kindness, we ought to consider not the person who receives them, but Him for whose sake they are done.”*
- So when we run up against someone we find disagreeable, we must remember that in serving them, we are actually serving God. Yet, real charity has the power to change the way we experience others.
- When we can push through and do the right thing for those we find disagreeable, and to do it out of real love for God, then God “supernaturalizes” our actions. He steps in and elevates our natural charity to a divine level.
- When this happens, you’re given a grace to see beyond those qualities and characteristics that are displeasing to see how God loves this soul.
- Lastly, the *Catechism* teaches us that: “The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of Him who “first loved us” (1828).
- When we try to practice of charity in all that we do, loving God above all else and our neighbors as ourselves – especially the ones we don’t like - we become God’s children.
- The chasm between God and man is then bridged, and we become coheirs of the Heavenly Kingdom with Christ.
- So may we all embrace this most lofty and sublime of virtues, especially with one another. May we each learn to love one another as God loves us. And by imitating Him in this way, let us trust that our eternal union with God will be made secure.