

Homily – Tuesday of the 28th Week in Ordinary Time – Memorial of Saint Teresa of Jesus – Catholic Charities – October 15, 2024

Dear friends, on this Memorial of St. Teresa of Jesus, we gather for a Mass of Renewal, celebrating the spirit of giving and service that animates Catholic Charities. We honor the generosity of donors, collaborators, and volunteers — those who live out the words of St. Paul: *“The only thing that counts is faith working through love”* (Gal).

St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians reminds us that Christ has set us free to live not under the burden of the Law, but in the freedom of love. A group of Christians of Jewish origin in Paul’s time believed that salvation required strict adherence to the Law of Moses, including circumcision. Paul boldly counters this, teaching that true freedom comes not from external rules, but from faith expressed in love. As St. Augustine said, *“Love and do what you will,”* because true love respects and fulfills the heart of the Law.

Today, Jesus calls us to clean the inside. In the Gospel, He confronts the Pharisees, who focus on external rituals, such as washing hands, while neglecting the purity of their hearts. Jesus teaches that the true cleanliness that matters is the transformation of the heart — a heart filled with love, compassion, and generosity toward others. Pope Francis has said that *“charity sets us free from the worst form of enslavement, which is slavery to self.”*

This message speaks powerfully to us who are involved in the charitable mission of the Church. Catholic Charities exists not only to provide for external needs — food, shelter, and support —

but to do so from a place of genuine love and compassion. Our acts of service, no matter how small, must flow from hearts cleansed by love. As Jesus says, give alms from what is within, and everything will be clean.

When we give to others, we are called to give from the depths of our hearts, not out of obligation or for appearance, but out of a sincere desire to reflect Christ's love. This is the kind of almsgiving that truly transforms — not just those we serve, but ourselves. In this way, our faith is not confined to external observance, but becomes alive in love, as we become living witnesses of God's grace and mercy.

As we continue this celebration, let us ask St. Teresa of Jesus, a woman of deep prayer and love, to intercede for us. And may Our Lady of Guadalupe inspire us to always seek the purity of heart that leads to genuine acts of love, so that through our faith, we may bring Christ's freedom to all we serve.