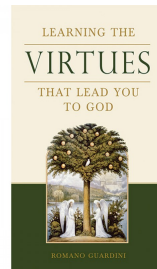


## Book Reference



## Reading Context - Kindness

*#1: So once again, the man who strives for justice, and he above all, realizes (Thomas says) that fulfilling an obligation and doing what he is really obliged to do are not all that is necessary. Something more is required, something over and above, such as liberality, affabilitas, kindness, if man's communal life is to remain human. Here nothing more (and certainly nothing less) is meant than friendliness in our everyday associations. This "virtue"—and Thomas relates it, too, to justice—is, of course, strictly neither due to another person nor can it be rightfully claimed and demanded. Still it is impossible for men to live together joyfully (delectabiliter) without it. "Now as man could not live in society without truth, so likewise not without joy."*

*The quote in Pieper's text above is taken from this text of St Thomas Aquinas:*

*#2 [B]ecause man is a social animal he owes his fellow-man, in equity, the manifestation of truth without which human society could not last. Now as man could not live in society without truth, so likewise, not without joy, because, as the Philosopher says (Ethic. viii), no one could abide a day with the sad nor with the joyless.*

*—Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, II-II question 114, article 2, reply to second objection.*

*#3: Kindness means that a person is well disposed toward life. Whenever he encounters a living being, the kind man's first reaction is not to mistrust and criticize but to respect, to value, and to promote development. Life is sorely in need of this attitude—our human life—which is so vulnerable.*

*#4: But in kindness there is strength—strength in proportion to its purity—and perfect kindness is inexhaustible. Life is full of suffering; if a person is well disposed toward life, then suffering touches him and makes itself felt. But that is wearing. Suffering demands our understanding; and that requires exertion. It demands help. But only he who truly understands the suffering in any particular case can really help; only he who can find the necessary words and can see what must be done in order to alleviate the suffering. Woe unto that kindness if it is merely well disposed but is weak. It can happen that it is destroyed by its own sympathy or, in order to protect itself, becomes violent.*

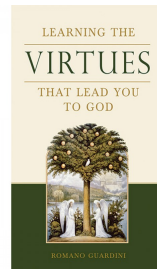
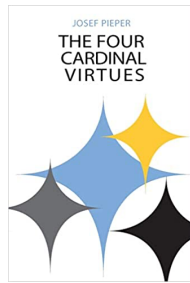
*True kindness requires patience. Suffering returns again and again and demands understanding. The failings of others touch us repeatedly and become the more unendurable because we know them by heart. Kindness must constantly make the effort and turn to the others.*

*#5: It may be that a person desires to dominate others. He says that he desires their best interests, but actually what he wishes is to dominate. Such a person is not well disposed toward life, for life is smothered in the grasp of tyranny. Many a domestic tragedy results from the fact that one person wishes to dominate others. It may be the husband or the wife, a son or a daughter. True kindness allows to life a proper space and freedom of movement; it even gives and provides these, for only in this way can life grow and develop.*

*#6: Or it may be that a person is resentful toward life. He thinks that he has suffered an injustice; his expectations have been disappointed; his claims have been disregarded. This may perhaps really be the case, and he should try to make the best of the possibilities that remain. But he cannot overcome the feeling of resentment, and he takes revenge. "They are all like that," he says, because one was like that. "There is no justice," he says, because he thinks he has not been given justice. Kindness pardons, for it is magnanimous and releases the offender; it trusts and always allows life to begin anew.*

*Much unkindness results from envy. Many a poor person sees another man enjoying his wealth. In some way or another, everyone feels that others have what he lacks. If he cannot accept this fact, becomes bitter, and envies the other his possessions, then his mind is poisoned and he becomes an enemy of life. Kindness can look beyond itself; it does not begrudge to others what it lacks. In fact, it can even rejoice with the others. We might mention many similar things.*

## Book Reference



## Questions focusing on the relation of kindness to the “interior” life

Q1. Our interior orientation towards God has to be one of constant thankfulness. Do we realize this need when dealing with other people, seeing them as God’s children? [Text #1]

Q2. Guardini says that kindness gives space and freedom of movement. How does this relate to Pieper’s idea that kindness is not obligatory and can neither be rightfully claimed or demanded. [Text #1 and #5]

Q5. Is an inner attitude of critical spirit of other people incompatible with kindness? [Text#3]

Q6. Does Guardini say that cynicism, or the mistrust of the motives of others, poisons our mind and makes us the enemy of life? What is the remedy— should we always assume that everyone’s motives are good? [Text#3]

Q7. Does culture and society play a role in fueling the dominating spirit of a person? Is true kindness simply an ideal — applicable with limitations? [Text #3]

Q8. Could a person who is not patient be kind? [Text#4]

Q9. Year 2020 demands oneself to be patient — at many levels : family, social, political — could kindness be ignored? [Text #4]

## Questions focusing on the relation of kindness to the “external” life

Q3. Is a long fruitful relationship possible if, at its very core — kindness is not exercised? [Text #1]

Q10. Does Guardini say that kindness always requires exertion? Why is that? [Text #4]

Q4. Pieper follows St Thomas in asserting that kindness is a part of justice, but above and beyond it – strictly speaking, justice is a duty, but kindness is a gift. As a gift, it can neither be demanded nor claimed. In what sense does he then say that kindness is necessary? [Text #1]

Q11. When we are control freaks, do we leave any room for kindness? [Text #5]

Q12: How can we be detached without self-interest when we act with kindness towards others? [Text #5]

Q13. In some situations kindness might be a hard pill to swallow – Is the conscious effort to build my interior self, worth it? [Text #3 and Text #6]