

# What is Virtue?



*"All virtues, all actions should be aimed at doing God's will, thanking Him and praising Him."*

*Frank Sheed*

Virtue has fallen from use in our society – it's not difficult to recognize with the state of things around us – lack of respect for life, addictions, broken homes and the list could go on. How many even know or understand what virtue is today? The line between right and wrong has become very fuzzy in our society.

**Virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.**

CCC1803

The word virtue from the Latin word (*virtus*) signifies courage. It certainly takes courage to live a virtuous life! Developing virtue allows us the freedom to travel the road to Heaven and to become more like Jesus. Our culture leads us to believe that rules take away our freedom – however, true freedom and safety come in following God's rules through Scripture, the teachings of the Church and imitation of the saints. It is important for us to continue to grow and to live out virtue in our thoughts, words and actions. It is imperative to teach our children what virtue is and to model it for them. If we do not help to form our children's consciences the world around them *will* and this is dangerous in a culture that no longer distinguishes between right and wrong.

*"Through the practice of one virtue all the virtues grow – similarly through increase of one vice, all the vices and their effects grow." St. John of the Cross*

Living virtuously may seem to be difficult and arduous at times but the more we practice virtue – yes, practice- the more difficult it becomes to fall into vice or sin. As we read in Sirach we will become strong and pure like gold as we grow in virtue and grow in our relationship with the Lord.

*"My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be hasty in time of calamity. Cleave to him and do not depart, that you may be honored at the end of your life. Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in changes that humble you be patient. For gold is tested in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Trust in him, and he will help you; make your ways straight, and hope in him." Sirach 2:1-6*

## Why practice virtue?

Our goal is Heaven and virtue helps us to get there! Virtues are the building blocks for Christian moral living. There are seven virtues recognized by the Catholic Church. The three **Theological Virtues are Faith, Hope and Love (Charity)**. They inform all the moral virtues and give life to them. The theological virtues dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have God for their origin, their motive, and their object - God known by faith, God hoped in and loved for his own sake. They inform all the moral virtues and give life to them. **The Cardinal/Moral Virtues are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance.** (to be discussed in the next insert).

## Theological Virtues

### *Faith, Hope and Love/Charity*

From the Glossary of the Catechism we read: *These gifts are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.* In other words these virtues are gifts – we don't deserve them and we haven't earned them but we need them! These are supernatural virtues. Through Baptism we have each received these gifts - however, we can choose to use these gifts or not.

**By Faith, we believe in God and believe all that he has revealed to us and that Holy Church proposes for our belief. CCC 1842** As disciples of Christ we are called to not only to keep the faith and live it but to profess it, bear witness to it and spread it. How do we grow in faith?? Above all we ask God to increase our faith in Him and we continue to pray, frequent the Sacraments, and study Scripture and the Catechism.

*"I believe: help my unbelief!" Mark 9:24*

**By Hope we desire, and with steadfast trust await from God, eternal life and the braces to merit it. CCC 1843** This gift allows us to have confidence in God; to expect that God will take care of us and give us all we need to bring us to eternal life with Him. The word hope has been watered down in our society. It often means that we "wish" for something. That's not the same thing as hope! Hope is a strong confident word – our hope is based on our belief in God. It is based on knowing that God always keeps His promises.

*"and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." Romans 5:5*

**By Charity, we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for love of God. Charity, the form of all virtues, "binds everything together in perfect harmony." Colossians 3:14** CCC 1844 The virtue of Charity/love is the greatest virtue. Charity enables us to love beyond our human ability to love – to love as Christ loves.

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12*