

# MORAL & THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

## Table of Contents

<b>VIRTUE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>MORAL (CARDINAL) VIRTUES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES</b> .....	<b>4</b>

## MORAL & THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

**Human Virtues dispose us to act in accordance with right reason and faith.**

(CCC 1804)

**“If one loves righteousness, whose works are virtues, she teaches moderation and prudence, righteousness and fortitude.”**

(CCC 1805; Wis. 8:7)

**The Cardinal Virtues, Temperance, Prudence, Justice, and Fortitude (courage), are the foundation of Christian moral activity.**

(CCC 1813)

**The Theological Virtues, Faith, Hope and Love (Charity), are the foundation of Christian moral activity.**

(CCC 1813)

**“So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”**

(1 Cor 13:13)

# MORAL & THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

## VIRTUE

1. “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”<sup>1</sup>
2. “A virtue is an habitual and firm disposition to do the 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.”<sup>2</sup>
3. Virtue strengthens our attitude and firmly disposes our intellect and will to control our passions and guide our conduct through reason and faith.<sup>3</sup>
4. Human virtues are acquired by education and are perfected by deliberate repeated acts of the will inspired by Divine Grace.<sup>4</sup>
5. “The Moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.”<sup>5</sup>
6. The Theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity. They adapt our innate mental and physical abilities to live in harmony with the Holy Trinity.<sup>6</sup>

## MORAL (CARDINAL) VIRTUES

7. The moral virtues - Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance are virtues that pertain to human behavior and ethical decision-making. They are acquired by human effort and are essential for living a morally upright life. They are the result of morally good acts and as these acts are repeated, they are purified and elevated by divine grace.<sup>7</sup> The moral virtues are informed by and get their life from the theological virtues.

### **Prudence**

Prudence is the moral virtue that guides our conscience and enables us to apply moral principles correctly in practical situations in our daily living. It guides the other virtues, especially the judgment of conscience. Prudence does not imply timidity or fear but helps us to apply moral principles to particular cases without error.<sup>8</sup>

### **Justice**

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give what

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. 4:8, CCC 1803

<sup>2</sup> CCC 1803

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 2:15

<sup>4</sup> CCC 1810

<sup>5</sup> CCC 1804

<sup>6</sup> CCC 1812

<sup>7</sup> CCC 1804, 1810, 1813, 2095

<sup>8</sup> CCC 1806

## MORAL & THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

is right to God and neighbor. It is the virtue of treating others with fairness and equity and giving each person their due. It disposes our hearts and minds to respect the rights of others and promote harmony and equity in human relationships.<sup>9</sup>

### **Fortitude**

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens us in difficult times and keeps us on the correct path. It helps us to overcome fear, even fear of death, and helps us to accept the trials and sufferings that come our way.<sup>10</sup> It gives us the courage to stand firm in our convictions.

### **Temperance**

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It is the mastery we gain over our feelings and appetites that enables us to maintain a proper balance even in the midst of desires that are inherently insatiable. Temperance is referred to as moderation or sobriety in the New Testament.<sup>11</sup>

## THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

8. Theological virtues are virtues that are infused in the human soul by God and are oriented toward God as their ultimate end. They have the one and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.<sup>12</sup> The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's innate mental and physical abilities for participation in the divine nature because the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity.

*His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. Through these, he has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love.*<sup>13</sup>

9. The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. The Theological virtues are Faith, Hope and Charity (Love)

### **Faith**

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that He has said and revealed to us, and all that the Holy Church proposes for our

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<sup>9</sup> CCC 1807; Lev. 19:15; Col. 4:1

<sup>10</sup> CCC 1808; John 16:33

<sup>11</sup> CCC 1809; Tit. 2:12

<sup>12</sup> CCC 1804

<sup>13</sup> 2 Pet. 1:3-7

## MORAL & THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

belief. God is truth itself.<sup>14</sup> Faith involves trust in God and accepting the truths of the Catholic faith revealed through Scripture and the teachings of the Church.

### **Hope**

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> It is the virtue that enables us to trust in God's mercy and salvation and to confidently anticipate eternal life with God.

### **Charity**

Charity is the highest of the theological virtues. It is the virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.<sup>16</sup> Charity motivates acts of selfless love.

10. It is upon these three virtues that we can build the foundation for our spiritual life and open ourselves to receive the fullness of the graces God has ordained for us.
11. Moral training and education must be adhered to in order to lead a Christian life. It is not easy because of Original Sin. However, by God's grace conferred through the sacraments, our cooperation with the Holy Spirit, and by obeying the Commandments, we can follow Jesus' teaching to love what is good and avoid evil.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CCC. 1814

<sup>15</sup> CCC 1817

<sup>16</sup> CCC 1822

<sup>17</sup> CCC 1811