

VIRTUES

A virtue is a habitual disposition to do good. Let us pray to acquire all of the virtues in abundance.

WE HAVE CARDINAL, THEOLOGICAL AND CAPITAL VIRTUES

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

The Cardinal Virtues are four moral virtues that are the foundation for the others. Cardinal comes from the Latin “cardo”, which means “hinge.” The Cardinal virtues can all be acquired through practice, and by observing others who are older and wiser than you are. All other virtues hinge on the following four Cardinal virtues:

Prudence: St. Thomas Aquinas once said that prudence was the primary cardinal virtue, because it is concerned with the intellect. Prudence is basically the ability to distinguish what is good and bad in any given situation, and to take appropriate action. For instance, if you are in a big hurry on the freeway, and you know that you are in an area closely monitored by the police for speeding, it would not be prudent to go faster than the speed limit.

Justice: St. Thomas Aquinas ranked Justice as the second Cardinal Virtue, because it deals with the will. Justice is the virtue that demands that we give everyone exactly what is due them. For instance, if the cashier gives you too much change back at the counter after a purchase, justice says that you must give back the extra money, if you know about it. And since justice is concerned with rights, it is very important to remember that natural rights always come before legal rights, as in the right to life of babies.

Fortitude: Another word for fortitude is courage. In the Christian sense, fortitude is the virtue that allows us to overcome our fears and continue in our Christian tasks. For instance, the 12 Apostles before Pentecost were hiding in fear of the Jews. After Pentecost, the Apostles boldly spoke out and were imprisoned for their outspoken beliefs in Christ. So here we see that fortitude is not only an acquired virtue, but it is also one of the 4 Cardinal virtues that the Holy Spirit can give us, as well.

Temperance: This virtue is one we all could use more of today. Temperance is concerned with the restraint and moderation of our desires for food, sex, pleasure, and drink. Where prudence dictates our actions based on externals, temperance dictates our actions based on internals. There is nothing wrong with sex in marriage, or food, or legitimate pleasure, or drink, of course, but when they start to own our will, instead of our will owning them, then we will experience the devil’s compensation of VD, unwanted pregnancy, obesity, sloth, or hangovers.

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

The 3 Theological Virtues are straight out of the Bible, and can only be acquired as a free gift from God. God pours these virtues into our very being through sanctifying grace, which we all know is obtained through the seven Sacraments. They are also called Supernatural virtues. They are as follows:

Faith: The theological virtue that is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” our firm belief in God and all that He has revealed to us through Holy Mother Church. Faith is an intellectual virtue, and if we are true to ourselves, we will know that God is infallible, and He cannot be deceived, nor can he deceive us. We then know that He has revealed all truth in His Church, and we will not deviate one iota from the Church’s teaching on faith and salvation. Faith manifests itself in how we handle our day-to-day lives, how we treat others, and in our Catholic devotions. It is written on our hearts, and all of our actions are the result of our faith. One of the ways we know we have true faith is if we are very afraid of offending God in anything, and are very anxious to please Him in everything.

Hope: The theological virtue that allows us to totally trust in Jesus and to desire eternal bliss in heaven with him, forever. Hope is a virtue of the will, and helps us to keep going in the face of adversity, mockery, and dry times. We know how it will all come out in the end, and it always helps to ask ourselves this question – “Where will I be in a hundred years?” And when we answer with “HEAVEN!”, everything else seems rather small and insignificant, especially when we meditate on the Passion and what Jesus went through.

Charity: - The theological virtue of love for God over all other things for His sake, and our love of neighbor as ourselves. St. Paul tells us that love is the greatest of the three theological virtues. Jesus left us two commandments – To love God with everything we have, and our neighbor as ourselves – And if we do these two things, then charity toward everyone, even our enemies, becomes second nature to our wills.

THE CAPITAL VIRTUES

The 7 Capital Virtues are the virtues which overcome the 7 deadly sins of lust, greed, gluttony, envy, anger, pride, and sloth. Most other sins like murder, for instance, begin with one or two of the seven deadly sins. And once we let one of these sins take over our lives, the other 6 are only too happy to creep into our lives as well. By praying to obtain all 7 of the capital virtues, we can put a stop to satan and his plan to destroy our lives. The 7 capital virtues are:

Chastity -- Overcomes the sin of lust. Chastity is certainly a virtue everyone could use more of today, as we are all bombarded with sexual images from TV, movies, billboards, the Sunday Paper, etc. Chastity not only moderates our desire for physical acts of sexual pleasure, but also helps us to overcome the thoughts which precede these impure actions. The Bible says that our bodies are temples to the Holy Spirit, but how many of us defile our temple through lust. God made our bodies to be holy temples of the Holy Spirit,

not satan's pleasure palace. When one prays for and receives the virtue of chastity (the daily rosary is a GREAT way to ask Mary for this gift!), the wandering eyes and the lusty talk all of a sudden come to an end. Just as Jesus was blinded by his sweat and his blood on the way to Calvary, just so, we should avoid looking at things that are impure.

Generosity – Overcomes the sin of greed. This virtue can involve donating money, or giving up our free time and talents for the less fortunate, or even giving our possessions away. It is a great way to detach ourselves from the things of this world, which is exactly what Jesus told the rich young man who asked him what else he must do to gain eternal life over and above keeping the 10 commandments. Generosity is NOT philanthropy out of our surplus wealth or government welfare programs. Generosity involves our personal sacrifice, and it is indeed sacrificial to our way of life. Remember the widow in the bible who gave her two pennies in the synagogue, and Jesus said that she gave more than the rest, who, even though they gave a larger amount, gave out of their surplus wealth.

Temperance – Overcomes the sin of gluttony. This is also one of the Cardinal Virtues. Temperance is the internal virtue that helps us to control our love of eating and drinking and sex. Whereas the virtue of fortitude helps us to keep going in the midst of adversity, temperance, on the other hand, helps us to stop in the midst of pleasure. This is also a virtue that we need to pray for, as most people today “go for the gusto,” and never even think about moderation. “All-you-can-eat” buffets are the bane of a lot of people today, and cause a lot of people to fall into the sin of gluttony, because, the more you eat today, the more your stomach stretches, and the more you have to have tomorrow to fill it up. A true death spiral.

Brotherly love – Overcomes the sin of envy. This virtue involves being genuinely happy at everyone's success, even those who we don't particularly like. We know we have this virtue if we do not ever badmouth someone who has obtained something that we think we deserve. One should acknowledge that it is God's will that this particular series of events occurred in that person's life and not ours, for a reason. God could be blessing that person now, on earth, while He may have plans to give us burdens now, on earth, so that we will be blessed forever in heaven. Always desire the latter!

Meekness – Overcomes the sin of anger. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Meekness is the virtue that controls resentment at others, and cultivates patience. Angry outbursts at the smallest thing are characteristics of someone who does not have the virtue of meekness. Usually God will send people and events into these people's lives so that they can acquire meekness. If you don't have this virtue, please pray to get it. Anger drives so many families apart, and is totally useless in the long run. When Jesus was confronted with an angry mob who tortured Him and killed Him, he not only didn't open His mouth, He prayed for them instead, and that is our model for how we should do things as well. There is such a thing as just anger, like when Jesus cleared the temple, but a lot of people get angry today over money, possessions, etc. In other words, save your anger for real injustices.

Humility – Overcomes the sin of pride. Humility is the virtue that recognizes our 100% reliance on God for all that we have, or ever will have. Everything on earth is on loan from

God, including our good looks, our money, our house, etc. Those who think that they got all of these things on their own are in for a big surprise upon death. The devil fools some of us into thinking that we got these things due to our hard work, or our talent, or whatever, when in fact, God gave them all to us. Pride is the devil's great sin, and he wants us all to think that we are gods too, like he does. But by being humble, we beat him every time, because humility comes from the heart, and the devil does not have a heart. In Christianity, the bible says that the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. God humbles the proud and exalts the humble, says the bible, so get exalted! Be humble!

Diligence – Overcomes the sin of sloth. Diligence is the virtue that tells us to fulfill our duties in life, even if they get to be tiresome. These duties include our work, our home, our country, our church, and our families. Too many times people just want to move on when trials come to bear, like a sudden death, or when a hard-to-get-along-with spouse becomes unbearable, or when the boss demands too much. Prayer is the key here. Never forget that when you die, all of the diligence you showed in your lifetime toward your loved ones, and those you didn't love so much, will be rewarded a hundred fold.