

## THE VIRTUES

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ~Phil 4:8

By Father Jim Chelich -

### What Are Virtues?

A VIRTUE is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but also to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he peruses the good and chooses it in concrete actions. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1803)

HUMAN VIRTUES are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, and habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous person is he or she who freely practices the good. (CCC#1804)

### THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

The THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES adapt man’s faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the Theological Virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in relationship with the Holy Trinity. (CCC#1812) God infuses them into the soul of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. There are only three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity (love). (CCC#1813)

FAITH: Faith is the virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that the Holy Church proposes for our belief. (CCC#1814) (*Romans 1:17*)

HOPE: Hope is the 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 (CCC#1817). Hope means believing that Jesus will be faithful to His promises. It means calling on God for help and trusting that the God will show you the way through anything hard or difficult. (*Titus 3:6-7*)

CHARITY (Love): Charity 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. (CCC#1822). Jesus defines what love is. Charity is to love as Jesus loved us: to die to yourself to give life to another. (*John 15:12-13*)

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### THE MORAL VIRTUES

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. (CCC#1804) The Virtues that follow are Moral Virtues.

The CARDINAL VIRTUES are the four principle moral virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. The English word *cardinal* comes from the Latin word *cardo*, which means, “hinge.” All other virtues hinge on these four. (*Wisdom 8:7*)

**PRUDENCE:** Prudence is the ability to see reality objectively. The virtue then allows us to judge correctly what is right and what is wrong in any given situation. (*Psalm 25:4-5*)

**JUSTICE:** Justice is the determination to give everyone what he or she rightfully need to live and prosper. God’s Commandments tell us what these things are and commands us to do them for everyone. (*Psalm 71:15*)

**FORTITUDE:** Fortitude allows us to overcome fear and to remain steady in doing what is right and good in the face of obstacles. (*Psalm 18:2*)

**TEMPERANCE:** Temperance is the restraint of our desires or passions so that we can do what is right and good. (*Psalm 51:12*)

**HUMILITY:** The essence of humility is being able and willing to be taught: “teach-ability.” It means not puffing yourself up mentally or with material things (Pride) so that it is hard to God and people to approach you, and difficult for you to listen and receive the good things God or another might be saying or offering to you. (*Psalm 25:8-9*)

**RESPECT:** Respect means showing in our attitude, words and actions that we acknowledge and honor the integrity of every person we meet. We honor them as a child of God and we honor them for the gift God gave them to give for the life of others. This is sometimes hard to do with people who are different from us in mannerism, personality, physical appearance or material possessions. (*Leviticus 19:32*)

**GENEROSITY:** Generosity is the most God-like virtue. Original Sin was becoming a “god” unto our self. Original Sin turned love into, “What good are you to me?”, “What do you have to give me?” Original Love is, “What good in me can I give to serve the good in you?” Generosity is exercising Original Love; searching inside of me to give something of mine that can serve the good in you. The more we do it the more the hold of Original Sin is broken over us. (*Matthew 10:8*)

**GRATITUDE:** Gratitude knows that something is a gift: our life, a new day, the people who love us, the people we are given to love, and the deep beauty that can be found in everything God created. Gratitude is expressed in words of thanks to God and others. Gratitude is expressed by worship at Mass. The word, Eucharist, means, “To give thanks.” Gratitude is most fully expressed in generosity with others. (*Psalm 111:1*)

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**OBEDIENCE:** Obedience is “doing” the good someone tells you to do, when they have the rightful authority to do it: your mother or father, your teachers, your supervisor at work, and the laws that are passed for good order in our society. You can always ask questions about what you are asked to do and, if it is good, you need to do it. No one has the rightful authority to tell you to do something wrong. You do not have to obey anyone who tells you to do what is wrong. (*Luke 6:46*)

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Responsibility is letting people count on you to do what you say you will do. However, if you said that you would do something wrong or unjust, you do not have to do it. You are being responsible to God in not doing it and only doing what is right and good. People should be able to count on you to do the good that you say you will do. This is “taking responsibility” and “being responsible.” (*Matthew 6:46*)

**PATIENCE:** Patience means that you remember that not everyone is as strong as you, as quick to understand as you, as skilled as you, or as spiritually mature as you. Patience lets them do the best they can and encourages them to do better. (*Romans 15:1-2*)

**FORGIVENESS:** When we are hurt, we feel pain and are angry with those who hurt us. We forgive because it is time to let go of the hurt and the anger. If we do not let go, it begins to poison our soul. Someone may tell us that they are sorry (and they should), or someone may not say they are sorry. In either case, we need to forgive, we need to say, “It’s time to let go of this.” God is always ready to help with this. That is why we say in the ‘Our Father’ at Mass: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Forgiveness is a decision. It frees your heart and mind to be happy and at peace. Your peace is in your hands, not somebody else’s. (*Mark 11:25*)

**SELF CONTROL:** With Original Sin, our self got “out of control”: we want to do whatever we want, however we want, whenever we want, and we showed anger when things did not go our way. Self-control is using God’s power to stop being selfish, and to stay calm when things do not always happen the way we want. (*1 Peter 16:7*)

**PERSEVERANCE:** Perseverance means not giving up on the good you are trying to do. When something does not go right or when you fail, perseverance means asking God for strength, and then trying again to the best of your ability. Many people just “give up” if they cannot do something easily the first time they try. Your greatest gifts may need perseverance in order for them to come out. In the end you will be stronger and more fully who God made you to be. (*Psalms 101:1-2*)

**PIETY:** Piety is the exercise of your religion: going to Mass, praying daily, examining your conscience, receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, giving to the Church of your time, talent and treasure, helping the poor and those in need. This unfolds you as a whole person: body, soul and spirit. (*1 Timothy 7:8*)

**HONESTY:** Honesty is to tell the truth when someone has the right to know it. Honesty is to do everything good you gave your word that you would do. Honesty is not cheating or tricking another out of something, or to win. Honesty is not to steal. The truth is important for justice, and honesty is important for everyone to live free. (*Proverbs 10:19*)

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**MODESTY:** Modesty is about how you dress and how you speak. Modesty says: "I do not want you looking at me thinking sexual thoughts about me." Modesty says, "I do not want what I wear or what I say to make you feel that I am better than you." Modesty says, "I am a good and beautiful person and I want you to respect me and get to know me." (*1 Corinthians 19:20*)

**KINDNESS:** Kindness is saying and doing little things that tell people that they are important and valued. Kindness encourages people to be better, and makes things between people better. Kindness draws people in and makes them feel they are part of the whole. (*Wisdom 12:18-19*)

**SELF-SACRIFICE:** Self-Sacrifice is the virtue of heroes and heroines. Self-Sacrifice is giving up something I could do or have for me, in order to give life to another. Self-Sacrifice is what Jesus did by coming to us and dying on the cross for us and then rising from the dead to be near to us. Self-Sacrifice is what a wife does for her husband and a husband does for his wife in a Christian marriage. Self-Sacrifice is what parents do for their children in a Christian home. Self-Sacrifice is what a friend does for his friend in a Christian friendship. Self-Sacrifice is at the heart of Christian Faith. (*John 15:12-13*)

**CHASTITY (Purity):** Chastity is using your body the right way. Chastity is not having a sexual relationship with anyone before Christian marriage. In Christian marriage, Chastity is not having a sexual relationship with anyone other than your husband or wife. Chastity is not viewing immoral pictures and avoiding immoral conversations. (*1 Thessalonians 4:3-4*)

**INDUSTRIOUSNESS (Diligence) (Fervor):** Industriousness is being animated by the good you are trying to do. Is being energetic to accomplish something good – to keep at it and accomplish it well. (*Matthew 25:20*)

**COMPASSION:** Compassion means, "To feel with" someone. Compassion feels someone else's pain or sadness. Compassion shares someone else's joy and happiness. When feeling someone else's pain or sadness, Compassion leads to Mercy. (*Luke 6:36*)

**HEARTFELT MERCY:** Mercy is a virtue of God. God shows us mercy, and expects us to show mercy to others. Mercy sees someone in need or in trouble. Maybe it is their own fault that they are in need or in trouble, but it does not matter. If they are in need, Mercy wants to do something to bring them relief and help them out. If they are in trouble, Mercy wants to do something to help them get out of trouble and begin to live the right way. (*Sirach 28:4*)

**SELF-DISCIPLINE:** Self-Discipline is pulling yourself into good shape physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. Self-Discipline is doing what you need to do without someone having to tell you, nag you or push you to do it. (*Hosea 6:8*)

**FRIENDSHIP:** Friendship wants your friends to be the best they can be: physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. Friendship does not "go along" when your friend wants to do what is wrong. Friendship encourages your friend and tries to bring the best out of him or her. (*Sirach 6:17*)

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**LOYALTY (Faithfulness):** Loyalty wants the best for someone. Loyalty does not give up on someone when that person is having a hard time. Loyalty says, "I will stand by you in all that is right and good." (*Sirach 6:14-16*)

**CIRCUMSPECTION:** Circumspection is taking time to think carefully about something before you go ahead and say or do it. Think things out before you speak or act. Ask Jesus about it in prayer. Ask him to show you the best thing to say or do. (*Matthew 7:7*)

**RIGHT JUDGMENT (Counsel):** We learn what is right from God in the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus. When we have a decision to make about something, we should check out what God says about what we want to do. We should also ask the advice of other people that we trust, people who know and follow what is right and good. (*John 7:24*)

**PEACEKEEPING (Understanding):** Peacekeeping helps people see the good in others and understand each other. When people are angry and hateful toward each other, a peacekeeper tries to help them forgive and reconcile with each other, and to live in peace with each other. (*Matthew 5:9*)

**MEEKNESS:** Meekness is having a receptive mind and heart. Meekness is setting aside what you think or want to do, and allowing people to talk to you about what is right and good, and about how to improve. Meekness is listening to what someone says, and if your heart tells you what he or she are saying is right, then do it. If your heart tells you that what they are saying is wrong, you must never do it. (*Matthew 5:5*)

**COURTESY:** Courtesy is doing things that show that you respect others. A courteous person thinks of what might be friendly toward or helpful to another person without being told, and goes ahead and does it without being asked. (*1 Thessalonians 5:15*)

**FEAR OF THE LORD:** Fear of the Lord is deep respect for God. Before anything else, this means knowing and accepting that God is God and you are not. It means understanding and that God's ways of doing things are not your ways of doing things. It means not wanting to offend God in any way. (*Proverbs 8:1*)

**GENTLENESS:** Gentleness is a way of approaching people and speaking to them. Gentleness avoids harsh, bitter or blaming words. It speaks calmly, with love and respect. (*Proverbs 15:1*)