

# Theory 3

## THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

### FAITH, HOPE, LOVE

We need the four cardinal virtues to obtain the basic, natural goods.

For a Christian, charity is the virtue that directs all other virtues, so we will begin with charity, along with faith and hope.

Because baptism makes us supernatural creatures, faith, hope, and charity organize all the others.

We need a special set of virtues to obtain the Supernatural Good, namely, God.

- These virtues are faith, hope, and charity (1 Cor: 13:13).
- **These make us a child of God.**

You can be a good person by means of actual grace and the cardinal virtues, but you cannot become a child of God.

#### **Theological Virtues:**

Cardinal virtues order you to a natural good(s), but for the baptized, they're oriented towards God/connect us to God, when directed by the theological virtues. Thus, cardinal virtues are directed to goodness in general but with grace are directed towards the supernatural good as directed by grace or theological virtues.

The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:  
-enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues;  
-giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;  
-allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.  
Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism (CCC 1266).

With baptism, we do not only receive the theological virtues, we also receive the infused cardinal virtues, which means prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude.

- Do these replace the human cardinal virtues, or are they added? This is still debated today by theologians.
- What is debated is how God has to raise the whole human nature if it's going to be able to reach an infinite good, namely, Him!
- When we're given the life of the Spirit, we're given new abilities that go with it.

*Theos* is the Greek word for God. These virtues enable us to possess God and participate in the Divine Nature (2 Peter 1:4). The divine nature is not added to ours, rather it transforms, elevates and perfects our human nature.

Hence, these virtues are the fullness of the Christian life, and charity animates and directs all the other virtues! It is their form.

**Faith** is an act of the intellect to believe in God and what He has revealed

**Hope** is the virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness so that we don't give up on pursuing our end.

**Charity/love** 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.

**God raises us above our human potential** to be more than we could naturally be on our own.

Think of a little child who wants to hug her father

- She can't reach him so the father picks her up and gives her a hug.
- She acts on her father.

Think of a little boy who wants to drive his dad's car.

- He can't because only adults can drive so the father picks him up and steers using the boy's hands.
- He acts with his father (shares in his father's action).

In both cases, the children are helped by their father to do something that they couldn't naturally do on their own.

God elevates our nature by **sanctifying grace**. God makes us to be more than we could on our own. This comes to us through Christ and by the **Sacrament of Baptism**.

These virtues are **infused**

- God gives them to us directly; we couldn't acquire them on our own.
  - They are not like the other virtues where if you work hard enough, eventually you'll acquire the virtue you're working toward.
- To get these infused virtues takes heavenly intervention

Even though we can't get these by our own effort, once we have received them, we must be trained or formed so that we may cooperate with God so that these virtues will operate to their fullest in us.

### **CCC 1814-1816 Faith**

Faith recognizes that God has given us information we couldn't know on our own (i.e., *revelation*), and we accept that information as true. We act according to what we now know and if our actions do not match our belief, we must not have believed in the first place.

### **CCC 1817-1821 Hope**

With Hope we desire God as our ultimate happiness, we are able to pursue union with Him before all else.

### **CCC 1822-1828 Charity**

Charity is a share in God's love. Charity makes us capable of loving God above all things for his own sake, not just for what we get from Him. Capable of loving our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

### **Sins Against Virtues:**

**CCC 162** Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: "Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith." To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be "working through charity," abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church.

### **Resource: Toolbox 1: Summary of Virtues**