

“We are children of God” (Rom 8: 14). In Baptism, we are adopted into the royal family. Jesus, the Son of David, welcomes us as brothers and sisters. We are entitled to call God our Father and to address him in the most personal way ... Abba, Father.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans speaking of divine adoption, people had a ready frame of reference in the norms of society. “Adoption signaled entrance into a new family, with all the privileges and duties of household membership attaching thereto.”ⁱ As divinely adopted children, we receive a royal inheritance, the promise of salvation.

We should not take this for granted. “The choice facing every believer...is between life and death, final justification and final condemnation. The one who yields without repentance to the sinful demands of the flesh will die an eternal death apart from God; but the one who prevails over the urges of the body will live an eternal life in God’s presence.”ⁱⁱ

Salvation is not a once and done deal. We are called to follow Christ and put our faith into action. Where temptations arise, we are called to resist the natural urges of the body. The Spirit helps us, but we must also do our part. Willpower alone is not enough. As we confront our own vices, it is helpful to exercise our muscles for good. Building on virtue is often much more effective than the simple suppression of a vice.

“Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God’s help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good” (CCC 1810).

- Through the virtue of Prudence, we discern what is good and choose to do the right thing. Consciously choosing the good is an honest exercise of our free will that helps us to grow in holiness. “With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid” (CCC 1806).
- Through the virtue of Justice, we love God and our neighbor. “Justice toward God is called the ‘virtue of religion.’ Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good” (CCC 1807). “Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance; be slaves of the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24).
- Through the virtue of Fortitude, we do not tire of doing good. “Fortitude strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. [It] enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause” (CCC 1808). “In danger I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is with me; I am not afraid; what can mortals do against me?” (Ps 118: 5-6).
- Through the moral virtue of Temperance, we exercise balance and use things in moderation. We accept limits and boundaries. Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: “Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites” (Sir 18:30), (CCC 1809).

As children of God, our loving Father wants us to live lives of virtue. “The grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good” (Tit 2:11-14).

ⁱ Hahn, Scott. Romans, Catholic Bible Commentary. Pg. 134.

ⁱⁱ Ibid, pg. 133.