

CHRISTIAN MORALITY: The Way to Happiness

Theology for the Laity Course
St. Louis Bertrand Parish – Fall 2021

Fr. Michael O'Connor, O.P., S.T.D.

CLASS 4: Virtue

- *HABITUS* (HABIT)
 - *A habitus is not an unconscious, involuntary, mechanical behavior.*
 - **A habitus is a stable or permanent disposition of a power of the soul that enables one to pursue an object easily, promptly, and joyfully.**
 - *The Seats of Habits: Intellect, Will, Sensitive Powers (Irascible and Concupiscible Passions)*
 - *The Sources of Habits: Acquired (by repeated acts), Infused (by God)*
 - *The Growth of Habits: Intensive augmentation (deeper participation)*
 - *The Corruption of Habits: Acting against a habit, Cessation from act*
 - *The Kinds of Habits: Virtue (good habit), Vice (evil habit)*
 - *The Four Moral Types: Virtuous, Continent, Incontinent, Vicious*
 - *The Kinds of Virtues: Intellectual, Moral, Theological*
- **CARDINAL VIRTUES**
 - “Cardinal” from the Latin *cardo* (“hinge”) – because the moral life hinges on these four most necessary human virtues.
 - **Prudence:** causes good in reason’s consideration of what is to be done (*prudence is about the determining the best means to an end*)
 - **Justice:** giving another what is due (*God, neighbor, parents, country*)
 - **Fortitude:** strengthens a man to act for that which reason dictates in the face of difficulties
 - **Temperance:** curbs/moderates passions that go against right reason

- Prudence is the highest and most necessary of the cardinal virtues: it is the *charioteer* that directs the exercise of all of the other cardinal virtues.
- Moral Virtues (*Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*) always observe a mean between the two vicious extremes of *excess* and *defect*.
 - *“In media stat virtus.”* ~ *“Virtue stands in the middle.”*
- THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES
 - *“Man is perfected by virtue for those acts whereby he is directed to happiness. But man’s happiness is twofold. One is proportionate to human nature, a happiness which man can obtain by means of his natural principles. The other is a happiness surpassing man’s nature, and which man can obtain by the power of God alone, by a certain kind of participation of the Godhead: being made ‘partakers of the Divine nature.’ And because this happiness surpasses the capacity of human nature, man’s natural principles which enable him to act well do not suffice to direct man to this supernatural happiness. Hence, it is necessary for man to receive from God some additional principles, whereby he may be directed to supernatural happiness...such principles are called Theological Virtues.”* (ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1)
 - **The Theological Virtues are the virtues by which God unites us to himself: makes us partakers of his own Divine Nature.**
 - These virtues are called *theological* for three reasons:
 - Their object is God (they direct us to God, rather than to human affairs)
 - They are infused in us by God alone (can only be given by God)
 - They are made known to us by God alone (Divine Revelation: Scriptures)
 - **Faith:** a habit of the mind, whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is not apparent.
 - **Hope:** a habit of the will by which we aspire with confidence to heaven, trusting in God’s help to bring us to our end.
 - **Charity:** a habit of the will that unites us to God in friendship and love.

- RESOURCE FOR FURTHER STUDY
 - Fr. Ezra Sullivan, O.P., *Heroic Habits: Discovering the Soul’s Potential for Greatness* (Gastonia, NC: TAN Books, 2021)