

Virtues

Mary Frances Skinner 2/1/2025

Prayer:

Attend to the pleas of your people with heavenly care, O Lord, that we may see what must be done and gain strength to do what we have seen. (From the Mass Collect January 16)

From first Reading 2/1/2025 Hebrews 11:1 Brothers and Sisters: Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.

By faith Abraham obeyed... By faith Abraham sojourned... By faith he received the power to generate descendants as numerous as the stars. By faith, when put to the test he offered up Isaac.

Mark 4:40 "Why are you terrified? Do you not have faith?"

Theological (Christian) virtues: Faith, Hope, Charity

CCC 1812-1813 The theological virtues adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature; for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object.... They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life.

St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological virtues are infused and caused by God, without any action on our part, but not without our consent.

Cardinal Newman: God gives this grace to all who ask for it, and use it.

Peter Kreeft: Faith, hope, and charity are the hands that receive God.

What is Faith?

CCC 1814 Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God." For this reason, the believer seeks to know and do God's will.

Peter Kreeft: The object of faith is not truths about God, but the God who is Truth... The creeds are like accounting books, God is the actual money.

Romans 1:17 For in (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by faith."

James 2:26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

CCC 163 Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God "face to face," as he is. So faith is already the beginning of eternal life

CCC 1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks." Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Hebrews 10:33)

Cardinal Newman: Faith is assenting to a doctrine as true, which we do not see, which we cannot prove, because God, who cannot lie, says it is true.

Pope John Paul II: Christ wants to awaken faith in human hearts. He wants them to respond to the word of the Father, but He wants this in full respect of human dignity. In their very search for faith an implicit faith is already present.

Peter Kreeft: Belief is an intellectual matter. Trust is an emotional matter. Faith flows from the heart...

FAITH: Peter Kreeft: Faith is saying Yes to God's marriage proposal.

Prayer:

Increase my faith, O Lord, help me to believe even what I do not understand. Help me to say yes to you with my whole heart, soul, and might. Help me to be a faithful witness to you and your church. Amen.

What is Hope?

CCC 1817 Hope is the theological 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...poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

CCC 1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

May 9,2024, Pope Francis wrote the "Hope does not disappoint" Bull Of Indiction Of The Jubilee Of The Year

1. *SPES NON CONFUNDIT*. "Hope does not disappoint" (*Rom 5:5*). In the spirit of hope, the Apostle Paul addressed these words of encouragement to the Christian community of Rome. Hope is also the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years. My thoughts turn to all those *pilgrims of hope* who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. *Jn 10:7.9*) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope" (*1 Tim 1:1*).

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope. Taking it as our guide, let us return to the message that the Apostle Paul wished to communicate to the Christians of Rome.

A word of hope

2. "Since we are justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing in the glory of God... Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (*Rom 5:1-2.5*). In this passage, Saint Paul gives us much to reflect upon. We know that the Letter to the Romans marked a decisive turning point in his work of evangelization. Until then, he had carried out his activity in the eastern part of the Empire, but now he turns to Rome and all that Rome meant in the eyes of the world. Before him lay a great challenge, which he took up for the sake of preaching the Gospel, which knows no barriers or confines. The Church of Rome was not founded by Paul, yet he felt impelled to hasten there in order to bring to everyone the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, a message of hope that fulfils the ancient promises, leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint.

3. Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life" (*Rom 5:19*). That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God's grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit....

25. In our journey towards the Jubilee, let us return to Scripture and realize that it speaks to us in these words: "May we who have taken refuge in him be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered" (*Heb 6:18-20*). Those words are a forceful encouragement for us never to lose the hope we have been given, to hold fast to that hope and to find in God our refuge and our strength.

The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death. This hope, which transcends life's fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called.

John 16:33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!

Romans 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Jude 1:20-21 But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

HOPE: Matt 5:12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

Prayer:

Increase and purify my hope, O Lord, let me never put my hope in even the best of my friends, but only and always in You. Amen.
(From Fr. Benedict Groeschel)

What is Charity?

CCC 1822 The virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

John 15:9-11: As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

John 15:15 I have called you friends

St. Augustine: Late have I love Thee, O beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved Thee!"

Matthew 5:44-45: But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

1 John 4:19 We love because God first loved us.

Fr. Groeschel: "Charity is not a perennial. It is an annual. It has to be planted over and over again."

Whenever St. Bernard of Clairvaux looked at a crucifix, he saw Christ's five wounds as lips speaking to him the words, "I love you."

Peter Kreeft: We need grace. We need God. We need to be loved despite our sin. We need God's love, not just man's. Man's love is fickle. Agape must be supernatural because only God has no needs. Human love is not enough because it is always mixed, always flowing partly from need, from emptiness. Agape is a busybody; it is active, demanding, and revolutionary. It is not a feeling; it is action. For it is the nature of God, who is action, not feeling.

LOVE: 1 John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, who loves us so much, help us to enter fearlessly into your heart. Amen. (St. John Chrysostom)

Why study Virtues?

Josef Pieper: Fundamental truths must constantly be pondered anew lest they lose their fruitfulness.

Romans 7:15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

Why are we here? Why are we created? What is the point of human life? What is the goal of every Christian?

CCC 1721 God put us in the world to know, to love, and to serve him, and so to come to paradise. Beatitude makes us "partakers of the divine nature" and of eternal life.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Leviticus 20:26 You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mind.

St Gregory of Nyssa: The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.

Revelation 4:11 You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.

St. Irenaeus: The glory of God is a human being fully alive.

Blessed Basil Moreau: Your Kingdom Come. All Christians are obliged to work toward that end in accord with the graces given them, by first of all resisting in themselves the world, the flesh, and the devil, enemies of Jesus Christ and their own as well. All who are called to a life of great perfection will have to begin the battle there and never lay down their weapons...Place before your eyes the image of Jesus Christ. (Founder Cong. Of Holy Cross-St. Andre Bessette) Magnificat 1/6/25

What is virtue?

Virtue comes from the Latin word "vir," = "man, hero" manliness, strength.

Vice comes from the Latin word "vitium" = "flaw, defect"

CCC 1803 A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself...The virtuous person pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

CCC 1804 Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, 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 man is he who freely practices the good.

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 1810 Human virtues are 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. the virtuous man is happy to practice them.

CCC 1811 It is not easy for man, wounded by sin, to maintain moral balance. Christ's gift of salvation offers us the grace necessary to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Everyone should always ask for this grace of light and strength, frequent the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and follow his calls to love what is good and shun evil.

St. Augustine: Virtue is a good habit harmonious with our nature. Virtue is an operative habit essentially good, as distinguished from vice, an operative habit essentially evil.

St. Thomas Aquinas: Virtue denotes a certain perfection of being. A thing's perfection is considered chiefly regarding its end, which is the action of the being. It is essential to human virtue to be a working habit.

The Cardinal Virtues are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance

Cardinal comes from the Latin word “cardo” which means “hinge.” All the other human/moral virtues “hinge” of the four Cardinal Virtues. (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance)

CCC 1805 Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal"; all the others are grouped around them. They are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

Aristotle: Virtue is a state of character (meaning habit, a firm disposition to act in a certain way so that it becomes like second nature)... The good of a human being must have something to do with being human; and what sets humanity off from other species, giving us the potential to live a better life, is our capacity to guide ourselves by using reason. Virtue's goal is the highest good, which is a good life, a completeness of what humans were made to be. If we use reason well, we live well as human beings; or, to be more precise, using reason well over the course of a full life is what happiness consists in. Doing anything well requires virtue or excellence...

Wisdom 8:7 (*Written in Greek about 50 BC.*) And if anyone loves righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these.

St. Thomas Aquinas: Man is perfected by virtue, for these actions whereby he is directed to happiness.

Peter Kreeft: We are probably puzzled at and perhaps even secretly resentful of God's alternative plan to save only those who come to him in faith, hope, and charity, even if they are relative failures at the four cardinal virtues. (But aren't we all?) But the reason for God's arrangement is simple: God is love. He wants all of us, even the worst. Only refusal of his gift can keep us out of his arms. The four Cardinal Virtues are not sufficient even for this life. We must “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” ...Without the supernatural virtues, the natural virtues would fail...Without God's grace we cannot be good.

VIRTUE: Peter Kreeft: Virtue is simply health of the soul.

Prayer:

Christ Jesus, model of perfect virtue, be with the men of our diocese today, as they gather to listen to speakers, support each other, and pray. Make them men, fully alive, after your own heart. Amen.

What is Prudence

CCC 1806 Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; Prov. 14:15 "The prudent man looks where he is going."... Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle... It is called...the charioteer of the virtues; it guides the other virtues...

Josef Pieper: the virtue of prudence is the mold and "mother" of all the other cardinal virtues.

Pope John Paul II: This task of prudence is the perfection of man himself... He take part in the divine plan of salvation. He must march towards salvation, and help others to save themselves. By helping others, he saves himself.

St. Thomas defined prudence as is the right method of conduct.

St. Thomas Now there is a right standard proper to the human species and peculiar to man's nature, namely right reason; and there is another, supreme and surpassing standard, which is God. Man attains right reason in prudence, which is right reason in the realm of action. But man attains God in charity.

Peter Kreeft said we like to share our views (think TV talk shows) rather than seek the truth. We've replaced “I believe” with “I feel” and rightness and wrongness are determined by consensus.

Deuteronomy 30:15: See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity (evil).

PRUDENCE: Josef Pieper: Prudence is interchangeable with conscience. I would just add a rightly-formed conscience.

Warning: Josef Pieper: It is not the “sinners” but the “prudent ones” who are most liable to close themselves off from the new life which has been given by grace, and to oppose it. Christian prudence means precisely the throwing open of this realm of faith informed by love in our decisions.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, help us to see where we are going. Help to form our consciences and make us prudent daughters of yours. Help us to follow the way, the truth, and the life of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

What is Justice?

CCC 1807 Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.

Aristotle: The most excellent of all the virtues...because it is doing good for others.

St. Thomas: Justice is a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will (habit).

Exodus 20 The 10 Commandments

Diogenes Laërtius (biographer of Greek Philosophers) (died 240 AD): Three things are surpassingly difficult: keeping a secret, accepting an injustice, and making good use of one's leisure.

Dr. John Cuddeback: There are some debts that can never be paid, like to God or to parents, we can't thank them enough. There is justice in trying. It is unjust if you never try.

Some people don't want to accept help because they don't want to owe anyone anything, which is smallness of soul.

Luke 10:25-37 Good Samaritan

Psalm 37: 27-31 Depart from evil, and do good; so you shall abide forever. For the Lord loves justice; he will not forsake his faithful ones. The righteous shall be kept safe forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous shall inherit the land, and live in it forever. The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak justice. The law of their God is in their hearts; their steps do not slip..

St. Thomas Aquinas: Justice properly speaking demands a distinction of parties (strangers).

JUSTICE: Peter Kreeft: Justice is rightness, beauty of soul.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we know that we can never repay our debt to you. We humbly thank you for all your gifts to us, your unworthy servants. Help us to obey you, to do your will, and to be gracious in our efforts toward others. Amen.

What is Fortitude?

CCC 1808 Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions.

John 16:33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!

Josef Pieper: Fortitude presupposes vulnerability; without vulnerability there is no possibility of fortitude. An angel cannot be just because he is not vulnerable. To be brave actually means able to suffer injury...The ultimate injury, the deepest injury, is death. And even those injuries which are not fatal are prefigurations of death...Thus all fortitude has reference to death. Fortitude is basically readiness to die...Thus every courageous action has as its deepest root the readiness to die...The essential and highest achievement of fortitude is martyrdom, and readiness for martyrdom...

“A Martyr is a martyr before he is martyred, or he wouldn't be a martyr at all.”

St. Thomas: Man must be ready to let himself be killed rather than to deny Christ or to sin grievously.

St. Augustine: Man does not expose himself to mortal danger, except to maintain justice.

Matthew 10:28-33 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Philippians 4:6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

1 Peter 3:14-17 But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil.

Warning: St. Ambrose: Fortitude must not trust itself.

Matthew 5:1-12 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

FORTITUDE: Courage

Prayer:

Grant us, we pray, O Lord, a spirit of fortitude, so that, taught by the glorious example of your Martyr St. Sebastian, we may have the courage to be faithful and diligent. Amen.

What is Temperance

1809 Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable.

Joseph Pieper: The purpose of temperance is a selfless self-love which seeks itself with open eyes and endeavors to correspond with the true reality of God, the self, and the world.

Gluttony is an opposing vice of temperance in the realm of eating and drinking. Medieval moralists distinguished five ways you could act in gluttony: hastily (gulping), sumptuously (demanding rich foods), excessively (too much), greedily (I want what I want when I want it), or daintily (it must be perfectly prepared).

Josef Pieper: Temperance signifies the realizing of man's inner order.

Sirach 18:30 Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

TEMPERANCE: Self-control of passions toward what is honorable.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

St. Augustine: To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only (God) (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence).

Pope John XXIII called the theological and four cardinal virtues the "seven lamps" of the Christian life.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this time we have had this morning. Holy Spirit, delightful guest and consoler of our souls, send your peace to the families who lost loved ones in the plane crashes this week. And grant the fullness of life to those who have died, in Jesus name, Amen.

Patron Saint of Faith: St. Faith

Patron Saint of Hope: St. Jude

Patron Saint of Love: St. Monica

Patron Saint of Prudence: St. Joseph

Patron Saint of Justice: St. Michael the Archangel

Patron Saint of Fortitude: St. Sebastian

Patron Saint of Temperance: St. Benedict

Sources:

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle

Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas

The Four Cardinal Virtues by Josef Pieper

The Virtue Driven Life by Fr. Benedict Groeschel

Back to Virtue by Peter Kreeft

Institute of Catholic Culture, Online Course of "The Cardinal Virtues", John Cuddeback, PhD