

# THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

## PRUDENCE

- A. Good common sense.
- B. The ability to discern the correct and best course of action in a situation.
- C. The virtue of prudence leads to the realm of spiritual discernment.
  - 1. Does the action lead to the fruits of the spirit?
    - love, joy, peace, patient endurance, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness, chastity.
  - 2. Does the action conform to the teachings in the Bible?
  - 3. Does the action lead to isolation or does it build up the Christian community?

## TEMPERANCE

- A. The mean between two extremes.
- B. Temperance refers to our tendency to seek secondary goods as ends in themselves referring to:
  - 1. greed
  - 2. gluttony
  - 3. lust
    - a. Abstinence - humanizes our appetite for food.
    - b. Sobriety - humanizes our appetite for drink.
    - c. Chastity - humanizes our desire for sexual pleasure.
- C. It is either temperance or an excess of whatever (food, drink, sex) which becomes an escape to a dream world of complete satisfaction.

## **JUSTICE**

- A. Fairness
- B. Also contains the ideals of: honesty, truthfulness, honoring commitments
- C. Includes the concept of righteousness - the conforming of our life to Jesus.
- D. The Christian must promote justice in the world  
-bring social sin to public consciousness.

## **FORTITUDE**

- A. Courage
- B. The ability to overcome fear in order to pursue the good.
- C. In its active sense -  
overcome evil for the sake of God's Kingdom.

# **THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES**

## **FAITH**

- A. A conviction - a belief in Jesus and the gospel.
- B. A trust - what we believe about Jesus leads us to trust Him.
- C. A commitment - Jesus calls us to do His work. Faith does not allow us to sit back. We are vehicles of God's grace.
- D. Faith = Virtue = Strength - grows in us through transformation in Christ.

## **HOPE**

- A. Hope allows us to imagine a future.
- B. We look to the coming of God's kingdom.
- C. Resurrection = main hope event. This gives us hope in the whole gospel.

## LOVE

- A. Most celebrated of theological virtues.
- B. Charity
- C. Four Greek words to describe love:
  - 1. "Epithemia" - a term for desire or lust where sexual love comes first.
  - 2. "Eros" - a union with others to find self-fulfillment, where sex is in service to a higher love relationship.
  - 3. "Philia" - a love of affection or friendship. Love towards brothers and sisters.
  - 4. "Agape" - the Christian form of love - devotion to the welfare of others comes first.
- D. Agape = the virtue of love manifested in Jesus -  
  
"there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."
- E. Agape is not passive. It gives without receiving.
- F. Agape knows that God will sustain the person at all times.
- G. St. Paul says that there are three things that last:

FAITH  
HOPE      and  
LOVE

and the greatest is love!

# THE SEVEN VIRTUES

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Virtue comes from the Latin word for "strength".
- B. These "strengths" enable us to live the good life.
- C. These "strengths" enable us to become more like God.
- D. The Christian idea of virtue is similar to the Greek idea of the "mean" between two extremes. Remember Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas who says, "virtue lies in the middle".
- E. Seven deadly sins are complemented by seven virtues.
- F. There are two types of virtues:
1. Cardinal - 4
  2. Theological - 3
- G. Cardinal virtues come from the Greco-Roman tradition. They are hinges upon which the moral life revolves. They are:
1. Prudence
  2. Temperance
  3. Justice
  4. Fortitude
- All four are natural in the sense that they are perceived by human reason to be virtue.
- H. Theological virtues come from the teaching of St. Paul:
1. Faith
  2. Hope
  3. Charity

All three come to us from revelation.