

II. Growth in the Virtues

The virtues are habitual and firm dispositions to do the good. They allow us to give the best of ourselves. 1803-04, 1833

An important aspect of spiritual growth is growth in the virtues. Virtues must be learned by deliberate, repeated actions, in which we are helped by God's grace. 1810, 1839

There are many human virtues. Four pivotal ones (the cardinal virtues) spoken of in Scripture are: 1805, 1834

- *Prudence*: the ability to see which course of action is good and to follow it. 1806, 1835
- *Justice*: the firm will to give to God and neighbor what is due them. 1807, 1836
- *Fortitude*: the determination to keep doing good in spite of difficulties that may impede us. 1808, 1837
- *Temperance*: the ability to exercise moderation in seeking pleasure and in the use of created goods. 1809, 1838

The root of all human virtues can be found in the virtues that relate directly to God (theological virtues). They are: 1812-13, 1840-41

- *Faith*: the virtue by which we believe in God and all that God has revealed. 1814-16, 1842
- *Hope*: the virtue by which we trust in Christ's promises and desire God's kingdom and anticipate eternal life as our happiness. 1817-21, 1843
- *Charity*: the virtue by which we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves. 1822-29, 1844

Growth in the virtues is sustained by the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit. The *fruits* of the Holy Spirit show forth God's work in us. 1830-32, 736

Basic Teachings

I. Experiences of Growth: Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Intellectual, Social and Spiritual

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth. It begins at a different time for each person. It is part of God's plan.

- During adolescence, our bodies grow physically and develop sexually. 362, 364, 369
- Because our bodies are changing so quickly, we have new feelings about ourselves. 1764
- In adolescence our minds too are developing. It is a time of broadening the scope of our learning. We face different and more complex challenges in our thinking. 158-59
- It is a time of change in our relationships with parents, friends and others, as we strive to become more independent and build lasting friendships. 2206, 2217, 2347
- Our relationship with God changes and often deepens. We no longer take our faith and relationship with the Church for granted. 27, 33, 94, 99

Like the rest of creation, we grow and change through predictable patterns of development. But unlike the rest of creation, we have been given free will by God, and can choose to cooperate with God in our own development, or to impede growth and refuse to develop into mature human beings. 1704-05, 1707-09, 1732

God's grace and guidance lead us to maturity according to our potential and God's plan for us. 1810, 2000, 2012

Prayer Experience

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-4.

Invite the students to reflect on the many ways God has been present in their lives. Ask them to write a petition for God's blessing on them at this particular time.