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Virtue: Being Made Perfect in Christ

The Character of Christ

Introduction

1.) The way we approach life's questions can and will greatly influence the outcome. Our Christian faith is no different. Think of an airplane making a landing; the pilot uses proper airspeed and altitude to make a smooth landing. If the pilot comes in too shallow or too slow, he could stall and make a hard landing. At the same time, if the pilot comes in too fast or too high, he will overshoot the runway.

2.) In this series, we'll take a look at the Virtues and what they reveal about our dignity, freedom, and encounter with Jesus Christ. Before diving into what the virtues mean and dividing them up into cardinal and theological, let's take a moment to check our approach. The truth is that we cannot live what we do not know. Knowledge serves its purpose only if it's understood and applied or lived.

Christ, Our Model and Life

3.) In our profession of faith, the liturgy and prayer, we profess the truth of Jesus Christ, who is true Man and true God. This revelation comes to us in the Incarnation, "*and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*" ¹ Theology describes this as the "hypostatic union" or the joining of human nature with divine nature. It is this union that serves as an approach for understanding what virtue is.

4.) Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, was truly and completely human and divine. ² At no time was His humanity or divinity minimized or weakened, nor was there conflict between the two. All that Jesus said and did was through perfect harmony and unity. You could say that Jesus's humanity was perfectly in tune with His divinity. It is this life that the Father invites us to, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Where does this approach lead us?

¹ John 1:14

² CCC #464

5.) You and I are created body and soul. We have an eternal spiritual soul and a material body. Notice that your body and soul are one person, like Christ, who is God and man. Our Blessed Lord is the model and blueprint. In all that Jesus said or did, the origin and intention were always the perfect good.

Being Made Perfect - Virtue

6.) A simple definition of virtue is having a noble and good character, or moral advancement in communion with God and His plan.³ When Jesus redeemed us, He didn't simply throw a fresh coat of paint over our rusty spots. Virtue is a gift and invitation to transform the heart, mind, and soul into the living image of God, the image of Christ. Virtues can either be infused, that is, coming directly from God, or learned by human reason and effort. If you look closely, you can see the pattern; virtues are both human and divine.

Reflect

Referring back to the beginning of this article, how are you approaching virtues or the virtuous life? Before jumping into each virtue, are we approaching the big picture first? Virtue is not just **something** we learn to do; it's an invitation to live with **someone**. God the Father sent His Son in the flesh so that man and God can be reconciled. The Gospels are a good reference point for seeing Jesus' life in action and word. *"A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."*⁴

Our Blessed Redeemer invites us to share in His life, a life in union with the Father through the Holy Spirit. The life of Jesus, true man and true God, is what we call Virtue.

Love the Lord Jesus, let Him love you, and go in peace.

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³ Dictionary of Biblical Theology, Word Among Us Press, page 636 – The Nature of Virtue

⁴ John 10:10, RSCE-2nd edition, Ignatius Press