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## **Virtue: Being Made Perfect in Christ**

### **Theological Virtues**

#### **Introduction**

1.) Consider Our Lord's teaching in Matthew 7:24-27 or Luke 6:47-49. Here the Our Blessed Lord speaks of building on a firm foundation. Where cardinal virtues are the materials used to build the house, the theological virtues provide the foundation that the house sits on. Moral virtues are acquired by repeated use and the help of grace. We are good by nature, although imperfect. The moral virtues *"perfect the powers of man to enable him to use correctly and well the means to his supernatural end."*<sup>1</sup>

2.) In the parable mentioned above, building a house requires not only material, but also a firm foundation. Virtue builds a house, or in this case a relationship, in the lives of God's people. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter of St Peter, the Apostle reminds us of our calling to be *"partakers of the divine nature."*<sup>2</sup> Partakers in the divine nature, as the Catechism and Sacred Scripture teach us, mean participating in the divine life of God. Let that sink in for a moment. Our vocation doesn't stop at knowledge about God; its end and purpose is living in, with, and through God's life.

3.) Natural moral virtue needs to be elevated or divinized to reach the highest mountains of God's glory, wisdom, and majesty. It needs a supernatural guide to fathom the deepest depths of God's love and mercy. In His divine wisdom and care, the Lord God has given us a great gift: the Theological Virtues. Paragraphs #1812 and #1813 of the Catechism provide a short but rich summary of the theological virtues. So let us proceed.

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<sup>1</sup> Handbook of Moral Theology, pg. 79, Dominic Prummer O.P.

<sup>2</sup> 2Peter 1:4, also CCC #1812

### Theological Virtues<sup>3</sup>

4.) Theological virtues are **infused**, that is, they are supernatural. Unlike moral virtues that form from habitual use, these virtues are produced and originate within the divine life of God. They are infused into the soul at baptism along with sanctifying grace. Theological virtues are **supernatural** in origin and power in that they are a living revelation of God.

5.) Infused into the soul at baptism, theological virtues adapt our faculties for **participation in the divine nature**. Supernatural virtue restores the soul's divine qualities. The soul is conformed to the image of Christ, who is the model of virtue and the union of God and man. In the soul filled with sanctifying grace and theological virtue is an ongoing communion of persons. That is, a relationship between your soul, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The end goal is a **relationship with the Holy Trinity**.

6.) Theological virtue gives the moral life its **character and foundation**. All moral virtues are informed by and draw their life from the theological virtues. With the moral virtues we seek to live as children of God; through the theological virtues we have a **pledge of the Holy Spirit's action and presence**. Consider for a moment: God the Holy Spirit and His gifts are the fruits of that promise.

7.) Among the many moral virtues, 4 are primary; they are prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The 3 prime theological virtues animate the soul of the virtuous life. In a mirror image of the Divine and Holy Trinity, they are Faith (Father), Hope (Son), and Charity (Holy Spirit). God invites us to believe in Him and gives us the grace to do so. God's invitation and our response to Him is faith, so let us begin.

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<sup>3</sup> CCC #1812 - #1813, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Three- Life in Christ, Virtues, page 446