

CCS Meeting 03/25/2006

Topic: The Cardinal Virtues

- I. Gospel: The penitent woman Lk 7:36-50 (15 minutes)
  - a. Reading of the Gospel (2 mins.)
  - b. Group activity – pair up and share
    - i. What virtues can you see from the Pharisee and the sinful woman?
      - Discuss concept of virtues [Catechism p.495 (1803)]
      - o What is a virtue? Give example (Faith explained – always telling the truth = veracity or truthfulness)
      - o What is the ultimate goal of a virtue? The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.
      - o Types of virtues
        - (1) theological virtues
        - (2) human virtues ((1804) – cardinal virtues
- II. Cardinal Virtues – “card” means hinge; all other virtues are grouped around these virtues
  - a. Prudence
  - b. Justice
  - c. Fortitude
  - d. Temperance
- III. Why did Jesus praise the sinful woman and not the Pharisee? Points to a hierarchy of virtues.

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).

## PRUDENCE

**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; "the prudent man looks where he is going." "Keep sane and sober for your prayers." Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

**1835** Prudence disposes the practical reason to discern, in every circumstance, our true good and to choose the right means for achieving it.

A person is prudent not because he never makes a mistake, but because he corrects his errors. He shows his prudence in preferring to miss the mark twenty times rather than give in to an easygoing 'do nothing' attitude. He won't rush into things foolishly or behave with absurd rashness. He will run the risk of his decisions. Fear of failure will not make him give up in his effort to do good. As we go through life we find ourselves coming across people who are objective and know how to weigh things up, who don't get heated or try to tip the balance towards that which favours them. Almost instinctively, we find ourselves trusting such people, because, unassumingly and quietly, they always act in a good and upright manner. This open-hearted virtue is indispensable for Christian living. But the highest goal of prudence is not social harmony or the peace which results from not creating friction. The fundamental motive behind prudence is to fulfil the will of God who wants us to be straightforward without being childish, friends of truth but never bewildered or superficial. 'The prudent heart shall possess knowledge', the knowledge given by God's Love, that ultimate knowledge which can save us and bring to all creation the reward of peace and understanding and, to each soul, eternal life.

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### *Of prudence*

\* *Docility*: implies the acknowledgment of our own ignorance; we need to learn from those who know, doing away with our pride. This is a basic virtue in order to grow in interior life.

\* *Sagacity*: objectivity before the unexpected; it presupposes perspicacity, ability, ingenuity. We should count on the flexibility of this virtue in order to solve new problems, -not-confusing it with relativism or-situation ethics. We -need it to serve better:-to-be cleverer than the children of this world (cf Luke 16:8).

\* *Providence*: to see far, to foresee events. *We should see things coming, let them pass by, and know trigonometry*: that is know when to act, when to wait with patience, and know how to relate events so as to foresee the consequences they could have, seeking always to do what would give glory to God.

## JUSTICE

**1807** *Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

**1836** Justice consists in the firm and constant will to give God and neighbor their due.

**2487** Every offense committed against justice and truth entails the *duty of reparation*, even if its author has been forgiven. When it is impossible publicly to make reparation for a wrong, it must be made secretly. If someone who has suffered harm cannot be directly compensated, he must be given moral satisfaction in the name of charity. This duty of reparation also concerns offenses against another's reputation. This reparation, moral and sometimes material, must be evaluated in terms of the extent of the damage inflicted. It obliges in conscience.

**2412** In virtue of commutative justice, *reparation for injustice* committed requires the restitution of stolen goods to their owner:

Jesus blesses Zacchaeus for his pledge: "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." Those who, directly or indirectly, have taken possession of the goods of another, are obliged to make restitution of them, or to return the equivalent in kind or in money, if the goods have disappeared, as well as the profit or advantages their owner would have legitimately obtained from them. Likewise, all who in some manner have taken part in a theft or who have knowingly benefited from it - for example, those who ordered it, assisted in it, or received the stolen goods - are obliged to make restitution in proportion to their responsibility and to their share of what was stolen.

Justice means giving to each his due. I would however go further and say that this is not enough. However much a particular person is due, we must be ready to give him more, because each single soul is a masterpiece of God's making.

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### *of justice*

\* *Loyalty*: the fulfillment of our commitments in every area of our lives. It is the foundation of our faithfulness to God, the human base for perseverance.

\* *Sincerity*: to show the right person and at the right time, all that we have done, what we have seen, what we think, what we feel, etc, with clarity, with regard to our personal situation or that of others. This virtue is necessary for the effectiveness of spiritual direction: to speak the *whole* truth.

\* *Industriousness*: to do what we should do, and to put our mind into it; this implies many other virtues and it is necessary in order to sanctify our work.

## FORTITUDE

**1808** *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

**1837** Fortitude ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.

The person with fortitude is one who perseveres in doing what his conscience tells him he ought to do. He does not measure the value of a task exclusively by the benefit he receives from it, but rather by the service he renders to others. The strong man will at times suffer, but he stands firm; he may be driven to tears, but he will brush them aside. When difficulties come thick and fast, he does not bend before them. Remember the example given us in the book of the Machabees: an old man, Eleazar, prefers to die rather than break God's law. 'By manfully giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws.'

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It gives us the necessary strength to fulfill our duties. It even makes up for the lack of our human manliness when this is not due to our own fault. It puts in the soul an untiring eagerness for sanctity: that "determined determination" Saint Teresa used to speak about. And it helps us to bear physical or moral pain with cheerfulness. In brief, it strengthens our weaknesses and removes human fear making us manly in faith and magnanimous in God's enterprises.

### *of fortitude*

.\* *Patience*: once a difficulty is known or foreseen, or a desired good is slow in coming, with this virtue we put up with the nuisances of the moment, with serenity. It is a very important virtue to have peace of soul and to discover the "interior thread" which unites us to God. Sometimes more fortitude is needed to "put up with something" than to "undertake it".

\* *Magnanimity*: greatness of soul - not to be pusillanimous; to consider ourselves capable of doing great things and to do them. A Christian should be magnanimous because he counts on God who is Almighty- It supports our hope, and is necessary for being an apostle, like the Twelve Apostles.

## 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. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world."

**1838** Temperance moderates the attraction of the pleasures of the senses and provides balance in the use of created goods.

**2290** The virtue of temperance disposes us to *avoid every kind of excess*: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine. Those incur grave guilt who, by drunkenness or a love of speed, endanger their own and others' safety on the road, at sea, or in the air.

We find ourselves able to care for the needs of others, to share what is ours with everyone, to devote our energies to great causes. Temperance makes the soul sober, modest, (and) understanding. It fosters a natural sense of reserve which everyone finds attractive because it denotes intelligent self control. Temperance does not imply narrowness, but greatness of soul.

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We need this virtue especially nowadays, when a materialistic society threatens to choke the spiritual sphere of life. We need this virtue which allows us to have our heart free in order to seek first the kingdom of God. We should make use of the things of this world as instruments, without putting our heart in them.

### *of temperance*

\* *Chastity*: puts order into the sexual appetite and directs it to its natural end. It is not the most important virtue. .. but it is indispensable in order to be a good Christian.

\* *Humility*: recognizes one's own shortcomings, qualities and abilities, and uses them to do good without attracting attention or calling for praise from one's neighbor. It is a preparation for supernatural life, because God gives his grace to the humble.

\* *Modesty*: it acknowledges the value of one's intimacy and that of others. It protects intimacy from strangers, rejecting whatever can damage it; and uncovers it only when circumstances may advise, for our improvement or that of others. It is the little sister of chastity.

\* *Sobriety*: it moderates eating and drinking; it distinguishes between what is reasonable and what is immoderate-