

Perfected in Grace
Lenten Reflection for the TAST Program
Part 4: March 7th, 2024
Life in the Spirit

Opening Prayer

On Zion sinners are in dread, trembling grips the impious; “Who of us can live with the consuming fire? Who of us can live with the everlasting flames?” He who practices virtue and speaks honestly, who spurns what is gained by oppression, brushing his hands free of contact with a bribe, stopping his ears lest he hear of bloodshed, closing his eyes lest he look on evil.

(Isaiah 33:13-15)

- CCC 1266: The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:
 - enabling us to believe in, to hope in, and to love God through the theological virtues;
 - giving us the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
 - allowing us to grow in goodness through the moral virtues!

The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

CCC 1831: The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are, according to Catholic Tradition, wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations.

- Wisdom is both the knowledge of and judgment about “divine things” and the ability to judge and direct human affairs according to divine truth (*Suma* I/I.1.6; I/II.69.3; II/II.8.6; II/II.45.1–5).
- Understanding is penetrating insight into the very heart of things, especially those higher truths that are necessary for our eternal salvation—in effect, the ability to “see” God (*Suma* I/I.12.5; I/II.69.2; II/II.8.1–3).
- Counsel (Right Judgment) allows a man to be directed by God in matters necessary for his salvation (*Suma* II/II.52.1).
- Fortitude (Courage) denotes a firmness of mind in doing good and in avoiding evil, particularly when it is difficult or dangerous to do so, and the confidence to overcome all obstacles, even deadly ones, by virtue of the assurance of everlasting life (*Suma* I/II.61.3; II/II.123.2; II/II.139.1).
- Knowledge is the ability to judge correctly about matters of faith and right action, so as to never wander from the straight path of justice (*Suma* II/II.9.3).
- Piety is, principally, revering God with filial affection, paying worship and duty to God, paying due duty to all men on account of their relationship to God, and honoring the saints and not contradicting Scripture. The Latin word *pietas* denotes the reverence that we give to our father and to our country; since God is the Father of all, the worship of God is also called piety (*Suma* I/II.68.4; II/II.121.1).
- Fear of the Lord is, in this context, “filial” or chaste fear whereby we revere God and avoid separating ourselves from him—as opposed to “servile” fear, whereby we fear punishment (*Suma* I/II.67.4; II/II.19.9).

Virtues

if one loves righteousness, whose works are virtues, She* teaches temperance and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful than these. (Wisdom 8:7)

* “She” is “wisdom”; this chapter is speaking about the gift of Wisdom

- The gifts of the Spirit are bound together in love so that whoever has [the theological virtue of] love has all the Gifts of the Spirit. If you do not have love, then the gifts of the Spirit will lie dormant in your soul. (*Suma* I, II, 68, 5)
- the practice of a life of virtue (especially love) is the key that unlocks the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. (*Suma* I, II, 65, 3)

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Pt 1:3-4)

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

The human virtues are rooted in the theological virtues, which adapt man's faculties for participation in the divine nature: for the theological virtues relate directly to God. They dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have the One and Triune God for their origin, motive, and object. (CCC 1812)

... are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character. They inform and give life to all the moral virtues. They are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life. They are the pledge of the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in the faculties of the human being. (c.f., CCC 1813)

Prudence ... disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; ... Prudence is "right reason in action," ... it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. (c.f. CCC 1806)

CCC 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. ...

CCC 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."

CCC 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."

Go Forward or Go Back – St. Teresa of Avila

I repeat, it is necessary, for this purpose that the foundation should not consist of prayer and contemplation only; for unless you acquire virtues by exercise of them, you will always be behind: God grant it may be merely a fault of not increasing; for you know well that in the spiritual life, he who does not increase, must decrease. I consider it impossible for love to stand still. (St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*: 7, 4, 13)