

THE VIRTUES.

THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

1. A virtue is a habitual predisposition of the soul to do good and to avoid evil.

2. The *natural* virtues are such as lead us to do good from motives based on *reason*. Thus to give alms to a needy person because our reason tells us that we ought to relieve our fellowman is to practice a purely natural virtue.

3. The *supernatural* virtues are so termed because we cannot acquire them of ourselves and they lead us to do good from motives based on *Faith*, e. g., to give alms to a needy person because through the eye of Faith we see in him the person of Christ Himself.

4. The supernatural virtues are distinguished into *theological* and moral virtues.

5. The *theological* virtues are so termed because they relate directly to God. They are three in number, viz., Faith, Hope and Charity.

Faith.

6. Faith is a theological virtue, with the help of which we believe, without doubting, all the truths that God has revealed to us and teaches through His Church.

7. We are bound to believe without doubting whatever God has revealed, because He is the truth itself and can neither deceive nor be deceived.

8. Faith is absolutely necessary for salvation, for Christ has said: « He that believeth not, shall be condemned. » (*Mark* XVI, 16.)

9. We sin against Faith by knowingly following a false religion, by wilfully denying or doubting any article of faith and by remaining culpably ignorant of the doctrines of the Church.

10. Faith is lost or weakened by neglecting one's spiritual duties, reading bad books and keeping bad company, by taking part in the services or prayers of a false religion, and by going to non-Catholic schools.

Hope.

11. Hope is a supernatural virtue which inspires us with the confidence that God will grant to us eternal life and the graces necessary for its attainment, if we do what He requires of us.

12. We sin against Hope if we despair of God's pardon or presume on being able to go to heaven without doing what He requires of us.

Charity.

13. Charity is a supernatural virtue by which makes us love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves for God's sake.

14. To love God above all things is to love Him more than any creature, ourselves included, and to be willing to die rather than offend Him.

15. It is our duty to love God (1) because He is infinitely good and infinitely perfect; (2) because He wants us to love Him; (3) because He has overwhelmed us with favours; (5) because without charity all the other virtues together and any amount of good works will avail us nothing for our salvation.

Explanation of the Plate.

16. Faith is represented as a virgin supporting with her right hand the Cross and holding aloft in her left a burning torch. The Cross means that

the mystery of the Redemption is one of the fundamental truths of our religion, while the torch signifies that Faith, like a brilliant light, illumines the souls.

17. *Immediately below* we see Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac. In such a heroic manner did this holy patriarch signalize his Faith, believing firmly that He who had ordered the sacrifice, would nevertheless fulfil the promise He had given him of a numerous posterity. (*Gen.* XXII.)

18. Hope is personified as a virgin holding in her right hand a crown and resting the left on an anchor. The crown signifies the glory of heaven and the anchor the expectation of gaining it.

19. *Below Hope* we see Job on his dunghill, emaciated and a mass of in sores. In the midst of all his sufferings and afflictions, he preserved the most heroic hope: « Although He should kill me, » he cried, « I will trust in Him ». (*Job* XIII, 15.)

20. Charity is symbolised as a virgin pointing with her left hand to her burning heart and holding in her right a Chalice surmounted by a large Host. The burning heart signifies that we ought to love God *with our whole heart*, while the Chalice and the Host indicate that the Holy Eucharist is *the hearth* at which to kindle the fire of the love of God in the souls of men.

21. *Below Charity* we see Christ at the table in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Mary Magdalene, a jar of precious ointment at her side, is washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair. Our Lord eulogises her for her charity and, turning to Peter, says: « Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much. » (*Luke* VII, 47.)
