

THE VIRTUES.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

1. The *moral* virtues are so called because they are of direct service to us in regulating our morals and shaping our conduct.

2. The principal moral virtues are the four cardinal virtues, so named because upon them hinge all the other moral virtues They are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance (*Wis.* VIII, 7)

3. They had been recognized and taught by the pagan philosophers of antiquity, but as purely *natural* virtues. Christianity having supernaturalised them and strengthened them in us through grace, they now have a higher aim.

Prudence.

4. Prudence as a supernatural virtue illuminates the understanding and enables us to choose the surest means for working out our salvation.

Justice.

5. Justice as a supernatural virtue leads us to render to God and to our fellow-man what is their due. It directs aright our feelings and actions towards our neighbour and makes us humble and diffident in regard to ourselves, just what absolute justice requires of sinners. « Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. » (*Matt.* V, 20.)

Fortitude.

6. Fortitude as a supernatural virtue gives us the courage to fulfill all the duties imposed on us by God.

Temperance.

7. Temperance as a supernatural virtue enables us not only to avoid all excesses and to exercise moderation in the use of everything, but even in such moderate use not to seek our happiness and the final object of living.

Explanation of the Plate.

8. Prudence is exemplified *in the upper picture on the left* by the judgment of Solomon. Two women living in the same house had each a newborn child. One of these infants having died during the night, its mother exchanged them, taking to herself the living one. The other woman, detecting the fraud, appealed to Solomon. Solomon is seated on his throne, with the two women before him and the dead child placed at the foot of the throne, while a soldier, sword in hand, is holding up the living child claimed for her own by each of the women. « Divide, » said the king, « the living child in two and give half to the one and half the other. ». « My lord, » cried the true mother, « give her the child alive, but do not kill it, » while the false mother said: « Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. » Then said the king: « Give the child to the first woman, and let it not be killed, for she is the mother thereof. » (*I Kings* III, 16-27.)

9. *On the right*, we see Our Lord giving the Pharisees and Herodians a lesson in justice. These having asked Him, in order to tempt Him, whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or no, He, seeing their guile, made them produce a penny and pointing to the coin, asked: « Whose image and inscription hath it? » They answered: « Cæsar's. » Whereupon He said to them: « Render therefore to Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's. » (*Luke* XX, 19-25.)

10. An admirable instance of Fortitude is furnished by Judith. That only woman, seeing that her town of Bethulia, was on the point of being taken by Holofernes, the Syrian general, resolved to save it or die in the attempt. Decked out in all her finery and jewels, she went out into the enemy's camp as if to escape from the impending doom of the town. Holofernes was so struck by her beauty and still more by the wisdom of her discourse, that he held a great banquet in her honour, at which banquet he drank to excess and became intoxicated. Being left alone with him, as he lay sleeping heavily, she seized his sword, which hung near him, and cut off his head with it. (*Judith* X-XIII.)

11. *The fourth picture* illustrates an equally remarkable case of Temperance furnished by king David. He was laying siege to Bethlehem, then occupied by the Philistines. Dying of thirst, he cried out: « O that some man would give me the water of the cistern of Bethlehem which is in the gate! » Immediately three brave men broke through the Philistines' camp, drew water out of the cistern and brought it to David to drink. But David would not drink it and poured it in libation to the Lord, saying: « God forbid that I should drink the blood of these men, for with the danger of their lives they have brought me the water. » (*Par.* XI, 17-19.)
