

THE VIRTUES.

THE EVANGELICAL VIRTUES

1. The *evangelical virtues*, so designated because they are specially recommended in the Gospels (*Evangelium* = gospel), are closely related to the cardinal virtues and are four in number, viz., Humility, Poverty, Chastity and Obedience.

Humility.

2. *Humility* is a virtue which enables us to see our own defects and to ascribe to our Maker the little good that may be in us.

Poverty.

3. *Poverty* is virtue which makes us detach our minds from the things of this world and fix them on God alone.

Chastity.

4. The virtue of *chastity* impels us to shun all illicit pleasures, and even when these are licit, to enjoy them in moderation.

Obedience.

5. The virtue of *obedience* prompts us to comply with all lawful commands given by our superiors, regarding these as God's representatives here on earth.

6. These four virtues form the foundation upon which the edifice of Christian perfection has been raised. The Gospel has supernaturalized them and has set its seal on them by recommending, not as a duty for all, but as a counsel for the chosen few, their exercise to the point of heroism in what we call the *religious life*. And in fact to enter that life a solemn engagement has to be taken to practise in this supereminent degree the three virtues of *poverty, chastity and obedience*. And the constant practice of the fourth, *humility*, follows as a matter of course.

7. Mark how Christ called a certain young man to enter upon this road to perfection, as told to us by St. Luke:

- « And a certain ruler asked Him, saying: « Good master, what shall I do to possess everlasting life? » And Jesus said to him: « Why dost thou call Me good? None is good but God alone. Thou knowest the commandments: *Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness. Honour thy father and mother.* » Who said: « All these things have I kept from my youth. » Which when Jesus had heard, He said to him: « Yet one thing is wanting to thee. Sell all whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow Me. »

« He, having heard these things, he became sorrowful, for he was very rich. And Jesus, seeing him become sorrowful, said: « How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God, for it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. » And they that heard it said: « Who then can be saved? » He said to them: « The things that are impossible with men are possible with God! » (*Luke XVIII, 18-27*).

Explanation of the Plate.

8. In *the upper picture on the left* we have a beautiful example of *Humility* furnished to us by St. John the Baptist. One day the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to ask him who he was. John declared to them that he was neither the Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet. They

then said to him: « Why then dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? » John replied: « I baptize with water, but there hath stood One in the midst of you Whom you know not. The Same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose? » (*John I, 19-27.*)

9. The early Christians practised the virtue of *Poverty* in the most perfect manner. All those who possessed land and houses, sold them and, as we see *in the upper picture on the right*, brought the proceeds and laid them at the feet of the apostles, who then distributed them, according to their respective needs, among all the faithful.

10. A perfect lesson of *Obedience* is given to us by SS. James and John, the sons of Zebedee (*see lower picture on left*). One day as they were in their boat mending their nets Jesus said to them: « Follow Me. » And forthwith, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the nets and his hired men, they followed Him. (*Luke I, 19-20.*)

11. *The lower picture on the right* illustrates Chastity in the person of Jesus Christ, the friend of the pure, and in those saints, models for all time of unsullied purity, viz. of the Blessed Virgin and St. John the Baptist, who support Him on His right, and beloved disciple, who stand on His left.
