

DAY 2

II. THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES: Faith, Hope and Charity

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.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1813.htm');" 1813 The theological virtues 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. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity.⁷⁷

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1814a.htm');" * Faith

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1814.htm');" 1814 Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God."⁷⁸ For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work[s] through charity."⁷⁹

1815 The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it.⁸⁰ But "faith apart from works is dead":⁸¹ when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1816.htm');" 1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks."(LG 42) Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."(Mt. 10:32-33)

Distinction between elicited (internal) and commanded (external) acts of faith.

For heroic internal acts of faith, the Gift of Understanding is necessary. This Gift enables one to almost intuitively know the mysteries of faith with clarity and distinction, and not only assent to these truths with ease, promptitude and delight, but also to declare them with simplicity and candor.

The Gifts of Counsel and Fortitude are necessary for heroic commanded acts of

faith. Counsel enables one to know the proper course of action without human reasoning, while Fortitude gives one the necessary strength to do it with ease, promptitude and spiritual delight.

Seven examples of common faith compared to heroic faith:

1. Common faith is that first help that is given to all who possess the infused virtue to firmly believe what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. Heroic faith is that same virtue aided by the Gift of Understanding, enabling one who frequently and firmly makes an act of faith to do so with clarity, promptness and delight.

2. The common habit of faith inclines and assists one to externally confess the Catholic Faith. When this habit reaches an heroic degree through the Gifts of Understanding, Counsel and Fortitude, it enables one to confess the Faith promptly and eagerly even in the face of grave danger to one's goods, including his very life.

3. Common faith inclines and assists the faithful to know the means necessary for salvation, such as the observance of the Commandments, the use of the Sacraments, etc. Heroic faith, due to the Gifts of Knowledge and Counsel, inclines one to know not only the necessary means, but also that which is simply useful and which falls under counsel and pertains to supererogatory works.

4. Common faith inclines one to pray. Heroic faith, due to the Gift of Wisdom, inclines one to pray frequently and fervently.

5. Common faith inclines one to submit to and obey God and the Church in matters of faith and morals. Heroic faith, brought forth by the Gifts of Understanding, Knowledge and Counsel, aid and incline one to maximum submission and obedience done promptly, eagerly and without natural reasoning in regard to the proposed object.

6. Common faith inclines and assists one to spread the faith among non-believers and to strengthen the faith of believers, or at least to desire to do so. Heroic Faith inclines and assists one to use all care, study and diligence to do the same.

7. The common virtue of faith inclines one to fear God, to hope in Him and

to love Him and one's neighbor. It inclines one to imitate Christ, to the practice of adoration and veneration, to have a horror of sin, to do penance, to be patient, to have joy in good works, and to have a humble opinion of oneself. Heroic faith does the same but more frequently and vehemently, with the total application of oneself and with a firm resolve, to the point of enduring any and every danger.

heroic hope

Hope

Hope is that infused virtue, seated in the will, which orders the intellect to that which is the final good *for us*, God.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1817.htm');" 1817 Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life *as our happiness*, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful."(Heb. 10:23) "The Holy Spirit . . . he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."(Titus 3:6-7)

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1818.htm');" 1818 The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man (*affectio commodi*); it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1820.htm');" 1820 Christian hope unfolds from the beginning of Jesus' preaching in the proclamation of the *beatitudes*. The beatitudes raise our hope toward heaven as the new Promised Land; they trace the path that leads through the trials that await the disciples of Jesus. But through the merits of Jesus Christ and of his Passion, God keeps us in the "hope that does not disappoint."(Rom 5:5) Hope is also a weapon that protects us in the struggle of salvation: "Let us . . . put on the breastplate of faith and charity, and for a helmet the hope of salvation."⁹⁰ It affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation."⁹¹ Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in

the Our Father, the summary of everything that hope leads us to desire.

HYPERLINK "javascript:openWindow('cr/1821.htm');" 1821 We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will.

⁹² In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end"⁹³ and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end. (St. Teresa Avila)

1. The common virtue of hope assists and inclines one to hope in God in all his necessities. The Gifts of Understanding and Wisdom incline and aid one to hope incessantly, eagerly and most firmly, without a shadow of a doubt.

2. The common habit of hope aids and inclines one principally to hope in obtaining the final end, God, and secondarily the means to the end and the necessary help in obtaining it. With the assistance of the Gifts, heroic hope inclines one to the same but with the maximum trust and surety, such as that of Job.

3. The virtue of hope assists and inclines one to endure adversity patiently in order to obtain eternal life. Heroic hope, through the Gifts of Counsel and Fortitude, aid and incline one to endure without perturbation, eagerly, with constancy and even joy, any evil no matter how grave.

4. The common virtue of hope aids and inclines one to deny oneself and hold oneself and other things of this world in contempt for the sake of things eternal. Heroic hope, under the influence of the Gifts of Counsel, Fortitude or Fear, does the same but with constancy, ease, and spiritual joy.

Since the virtue and acts of hope are interior, Brancati writes that certain acts, guided by heroic faith, are signs of heroic hope, e.g. the exact observance of divine and ecclesiastical law, and the observance of the evangelical counsels. On the other hand, it is

easy to determine when one acts for temporal motives because he seeks and freely accepts human praise for his works.

"Virtus fidei communis inclinatur ad Dei timorem, spem et amorem, necnon et proximi; ad imitationem Christi, ad laetiam, et dulciam, ad horrorem peccati, ad poenitentiam, patientiam, ad laetiam bonorum operum, et ad humiliter de se sentiendum; Fides vero heroica ab haec omnia crebro ex Dei dono timoris consilii, etc. instinctu et impulsu, ac vehementi cum applicatione peragenda, et firmo proposito exponendi se omni periculo ut haec fiant". L. BRANCATI, *Comm.*, vol. II, d. 32, a. 9, n. 210, p. 743.

"Etiam si occiderit me, in ipso sperabo." *Job* 13:15
cf. *Rom* 5:3,4; 12:12