

It is not enough for the Christian to avoid sin: they ought also to practise virtue and do good works, according to these words of the Holy Ghost: Avoid evil and do good. Virtue is a disposition of the soul which urges us to do good. In the same sense that vice is a wicked disposition of the heart, a bad habit, so virtue is a good habit, which disposes us to do what is conformable to the law of God and His holy will.

Virtue is our perfection; it renders us pleasing and perfect in the eyes of our Creator. We have been created to practise virtue, as the tree to bear fruits, as the sun to emit its rays: virtue is the fruit which the reasonable creature ought to produce; it is our glory and his beauty. Without virtue, we are a barren tree, a star without light. Hence it follows that the perfection of the human creature in the eyes of God and his true greatness consists not in riches, or in knowledge, or in any other exterior advantage, but in virtue; and that we are more or less perfect, according as we practise more or less of the virtues.

We call Christian virtues those which dispose us to do good according to the teaching of Jesus Christ; human virtues those which we practise in accordance with the light of reason alone, and for a wholly natural and worldly end: thus, to give alms for the love of God is a Christian virtue; to do so through pure compassion is human kindness or philanthropy

We say that a virtue is infused, when it is the gift of the Holy Spirit to man, and accompanies sanctifying grace. We call acquired, the virtue which we attain by our own efforts, and by the frequent repetition of the acts which it enjoins. The virtues are divided into theological and moral virtues. The theological virtues have for their object God Himself: they refer immediately to God, and affect our morals only mediately, by the influence they exercise over our thoughts, sentiment, designs, and actions. There are three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, Charity.

The moral virtues have for their object to regulate our morals, to control our actions, and relate but indirectly to God. These are very numerous, and form four groups, which are classified under the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance.

Let us remember, my brethren, that the heart of a Christian ought to be a garden fruitful and fragrant of virtues, as was that of Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother. Let us then make it the labour of our every-day life to cultivate these beautiful virtues, and let us not cease to ask the helps of grace, which, as a teeming dew, shall cause them to grow and blossom.