Sharing in Jesus’ Virtues: 
Happiness and Healing the Human Heart

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The Cardinal Virtues

Review

Our Aim:  
1. Confidence in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who loves us and desires our flourishing and happiness more than even we do.  
2. Wisdom & self-awareness, especially about our besetting virtue struggle, that we might respond as freely as possible to God’s love with love from the heart and become all we are meant to be in Him and thus attain the supernatural happiness for which we are destined—and live life well here and now.

“I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” Jesus (John 10:10)

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Paul (Galatians 2:20)

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation [creature].” Paul (II Corinthians 5:17)

“The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.” Gregory of Nyssa

• Full Freedom to attain Happiness / Beatitude, to Love “as I have loved you”  
• Fullness of Life in Christ by Divinization, Being Born Again by Grace in Baptism, Adoption by the Father, Becoming “other Christs” and sons in the Son, the New Adam  
• Sharing in Christ’s Virtues by Friendship with Jesus  
• A New Measure of Human Action beyond our natural capability: Loving from the Heart  
• The need for Healing of Heart, at the level of our Being (not simply actions or “doings”), for acts flow from being. “Out of the heart flow good or evil…”  
• The perfection / excellence / readiness of our powers / faculties for the good: VIRTUE = the “effective ordering” / disposition / readiness of our soul (intellect and will) toward ALL good, both natural and supernatural.  
• Poverty of Heart, Fear of the Lord, the Beginning of Wisdom
I. Theological and Cardinal:

A. Distinction between Theological & Cardinal:

Theological virtues: Main concern = relationship directly with Creator, our END
   Secondary concern = relation with His creation

Cardinal virtues: Main concern = relation with creation, things of creation = MEANS to the END
   Secondary concern = therefore, also with Creator

B. Distinction within Cardinal between natural & supernatural:

Two valid ends toward which we are ordered:
- the good life within the limits of natural world, natural order:
  o relation with the natural goods of this life within this life
  o “the good life” which even non-Christians, non-baptized can aspire to
  o Thus, the Romans & Greeks & others speak of the cardinal virtues acquired by human effort (cf. Wisdom 8:7)
- the good life which transcends the natural order: the supernatural end of heaven, union with God, our Greatest Good & Highest Happiness
  o relation with the natural goods of this life on the way to & in light of supernatural life; using these things with supernatural motive
  o “the Good life” that adopted sons in the Son aspire to
  o Thus, infused, supernatural cardinal virtues, gifts of God to order us in our relation with natural things in a supernatural way; acquired by gifting of God

C. Completeness of the Cardinal virtues: Mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive

- the virtues ARE distinct from one another: they perfect distinct dimensions, dispose intellect & will effectively toward the good in distinct ways
- but they collectively cover everything: there is no “fifth” cardinal virtue

Therefore, Cardinal virtues = the “hinge” virtues upon which all other virtues (apart from Theological virtues) hinge: the list of virtues is perhaps limitless (Thomas Aquinas lists about fifty!)—virtues cover the entire range of human activity—but they all come under the headings of these four.

- cardinal virtues: Four and only four

Cardinal Virtue of Prudence, the most important virtue that enables us to act wisely in choosing the best good thing in every circumstance on the Journey: The “Charioteer of All Virtues” for wise daily living.
Perfected Intellect for informing Will what needs to be done well here & now.

Cardinal Virtue of Justice, the virtue that enables us to be fair & responsible to all, giving each his due good (including God) on our Journey.
Perfected Will for doing due thing.
Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude, the virtue that enables us to be firm and to face our fears of danger & difficulty on our Journey. 

Perfects Will for ordering Passions in response to difficulty.

Cardinal Virtue of Temperance, the virtue that enables us to act with self-control, right order, & moderation in use of all good pleasing things on our Journey. 

Perfects Will for ordering Passions in response to what is pleasing.

Because these excellences (cardinal virtues) order us toward the natural goods of the world, they can be gained chiefly through human effort—thus, a non-baptized person can achieve a certain well-ordered life.

But because we need to use the natural goods of this world also as means toward a supernatural end, we need supernatural excellences to understand and move toward the goods of this life in light of supernatural reality. Therefore, supernatural cardinal virtues must be infused in us (given us) purely as gift by grace from God Himself (The Gift) to bring us by means of other goods to Himself. Yet the supernatural cardinal virtues depend upon the facility of the natural cardinal virtues—they are the same kind of operations—in order to be effective.

CCC 1804 Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

1805 Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal"; all the others are grouped around them. They are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. "If anyone loves righteousness, [Wisdom's] labors are virtues; for she teaches temperance and prudence, justice, and courage." (Wisdom 8:7). These virtues are praised under other names in many passages of Scripture.

1810 Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them.

1811 It is not easy for man, wounded by sin, to maintain moral balance. Christ's gift of salvation offers us the grace necessary to persevere in the pursuit of the virtues. Everyone should always ask for this grace of light and strength, frequent the sacraments, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and follow his calls to love what is good and shun evil.
II. The Virtue of Prudence: “Sound judgment for action”
“Wisdom” “right reason in action”

A. Definition

Cardinal Virtue of Prudence, the most important virtue that enables us to act wisely in choosing the best good thing in every circumstance on the Journey: The “Charioteer of All Virtues” for wise daily living.

Perfects Intellect for informing Will what needs to be done well here & now.

CCC 1806 Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going."65 "Keep sane and sober for your prayers."66 Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle.67 It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called auriga virtutum (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

B. Description & Characteristics

- “receiving reality” as it is, in all its complexity
- deliberating & judging well
- acting skillfully & appropriately
- to bring about best thing here and now in these circumstances from the good already present: what’s the next best thing to do right now; greater good from good

Three main parts: Upon “reading / receiving reality”…
1. Deliberation / discernment about all possible means for achieving end: DISCERN
2. Judgment: THIS is the thing to be done, the choice to be made: DECIDE
3. Commanding the will to “do this”: skillful & deliberate “effecting for action”: DO

Eight integral parts:
1. Ability to reason / reflect: to make connections / build upon what one knows
2. Knowledge: Memory of the past (& learning from mistakes)
3. Knowledge: Understanding of the present
4. Gaining knowledge from another: teachableness / docility to counsel
5. Gaining knowledge of one’s own: shrewdness, quick perception
6. Ordering means to the end for action: foresight
7. Taking circumstances into account: circumspection
8. Avoiding obstacles (especially within oneself): caution
Prudence involves “opinion” rather than “certainty,” for involved with changing circumstances, numerous possibilities, “could be otherwise” scenarios, time, various legitimate means to same end, reading of both intended and “unintended” consequences, individual capabilities…

…but is NOT “whatever” or “any possibility”: it is TRUE WISDOM. The Wise are to be distinguished from the merely knowledgeable, the clever, the manipulative, those with good intentions…

**THE creative virtue, THE virtue of the Wise: orders the Theological Virtues!**

**Examples:**
Four men walking by swift-moving river: one falls in. What do other three do? (A trained lifeguard, an average swimmer, a non-swimmer).

**Requires ability to read reality: ALL Reality, including the supernatural.**
- Fortitude & Temperance are essential for “seeing truly”
- The saints = those who see more, whose prudential discernment & judgment may not appear at first to us with more limited insight to be in fact wise.

Proverbs 26:12

Proverbs 8:1-6 Both folly and wisdom cry out in the public square

Luke 12:16-21

Sirach 11:15 Wisdom comes from the Lord

Jer 4:12 The foolish think God does not see

Proverbs 26:4-5 / I Samuel 15:1-31: 1) fact level 2) outward sin level (disobedience) 3) level of heart—need to read reality correctly

Proverbs 22:15 Physical discipline (non-abusive) essential for gaining prudence

**Prudence ALWAYS to be cultivated,** and in specific areas of your responsibility:
- Parents for raising children into adults, into saints fit for heaven
- Governors, leaders, managers, pastors, coaches…
- Military prudence
- Political prudence
- Legal prudence (jurisprudence)
- in specific fields: medicine, health care, education, social work…
- Mastering one’s own life, sharing in Jesus’ role as King: how to order life as a disciple, cultivate prayer & all spiritual disciplines…

**Gift of Holy Spirit:** Counsel
III. The Virtue of Justice: “Fairness & responsibility”

A. Definition

**Cardinal Virtue of Justice**, the virtue that enables us to be fair & responsible to all, giving each his due good (including God) on our Journey. **Perfects Will for doing due thing**.

1807 Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "**virtue of religion.**" Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor."68 "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."69

B. Description & Characteristics

**Reflects original Justice in the Triune God:** God “does justice to himself” = true knowledge of Himself (the Son, the Word), true giving of self in Love to what He knows (the Spirit). Justice in God = **generative**.

Human justice = not generative in same way, but when operating is always fruitful. Life flourishes under justice.

- Man = co-creator with God. Life is sustained by co-creators with God.

- Isaiah 55:10

- Psalm 85:10-13

- Genesis 1:27 Times of Justice fulfill the original command to “be fruitful & multiply”

- Man & Woman created in *Imago Dei* have dignity derived from God directly, participate in His creative ordering of creation: from God & for God, for own sake, for own fulfillment. **Injustice** = disregarding this reality.

- Therefore: ALL social justice, ALL sexual morality is rooted here. Note: the sexual powers are ordered toward God and toward children, therefore toward society. **Sexual morality is matter of personal & social justice**.

**Rights:** the basis for justice…rooted in the created order, in something beyond us, in God’s word and act.
First right: the privilege of existence
1. To develop self according to God’s plan: to cooperate in one’s own becoming while recognizing & fostering the becoming of others which is their right.
2. To make use of whatever is necessary (the goods of creation) to do so: private property and relationships.
3. Therefore, the “goods of creation” have a universal destiny…distributed by private property. “Private property” & “universal destination of goods” = Two poles/principles.

Ten Commandments (Words) = Principles of Justice
1. Toward God
2. Toward others (n.b. to parents (& their duties) are bridge to God)
Therefore, at level of heart: do not even want to take to self what is not yours, what is ordered toward God; root out / let God purify the disordered desire of the heart.

Note: Love is concerned with “gift,” giving what is mine for God, for you.
Justice is concerned with “what is due.”

Three movements / dimensions of Justice:
- Peer to peer = commutative
- Authority (group) to each = distributive
- Each to authority (group) = legal

Justice is never fully achieved in this world; some things are beyond ability to “render what is due”:

To God: “Religion” ("binding oneself"): devotion, prayer, adoration, sacrifice, tithes & gifts, vows & promises, invocation, GRATITUDE (Eucharist), obedience…
To Parents: Piety, respect, obedience, gratitude, care…
To Country: Patriotism (proportionate to greater Justice due to God)

King David = a struggle with justice…and, because a king, with huge consequences.

Unjust taking
Over-the-top punishment
Unjust vengeance (without restraint or by illegitimate authority)
Actions that lead others to unjust doing
Making promises one cannot keep
Unjust influence on others by what one speaks

Psalm 1  The Just Man (Jesus) walks in the Way of the Lord

Gift of Holy Spirit: Piety
IV. The Virtue of Fortitude: “Personal toughness”
“perseverance”

Note: with Fortitude & Temperance, we are dealing with proper, excellent ordering of the Will to govern by Reason & Faith the sense appetites WITHIN us, as they respond (as they cannot not respond) to what is fearful/ dangerous/ difficult (irascible appetite: “Fight or Run Away!”) or to what is pleasant/ pleasing (concupiscible appetite: “I like”).

Unlike justice, which is OUTWARDLY directed and whose measure (of the appetite of the will) is strictly known, the measure of these appetites is relative to the force and particular inclinations of one’s internal responses to the “data” of the senses. The excellence (“mean” or “perfect” point) lies in being free to respond rightly to the impact of what is present (“Run away!” or “I like!”) as dictated by right reason and Faith. Herein is the relation to prudence.

A. Definition

Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude, the virtue that enables us to be firm and to face our fears of danger & difficulty on our Journey. Perfects Will for ordering Passions in response to difficulty.

1808 Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song."70 “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."71

B. Description & Characteristics

The Good is already known by Justice, Faith, Hope, and Love; Prudence already knows the means for attaining the Good…

…Fortitude serves the Good End as known, in face of fear & difficulty & threat of loss & temptation to flee:
- enables us to suffer loss for sake of achieving greater good.
- enables us to trust in God’s Providence while being willing to die in conflict for the sake of the Good—at least willing to die even if don’t actually.
- for sake of genuinely good cause (not any cause: death for evil cause is not virtue)
- in expectation of success, of God’s providence (allied with Hope)
- thus as witness to (martyr for) Truth of the Good.
II Timothy 1:7-8 “For God did not give us a spirit [heart] of cowardice, but of power and love and self-control...Therefore bear your share of hardship for the Gospel.”

What is lost is usually not gotten back: loss of goods, or limb, or life.

“Acting manfully,” “willingness to endure injury or death,” “reasonable hope of success”...but without “trusting God’s Providence” is NOT fortitude.

Not virtue:
- Physical strength per se
- Fearlessness (this is an excess, not a virtue, and may lead to rashness)
- For lesser good (this is thrill of danger or mercenary undertaking)
- Fortitude in the imagination but unwilling to live up to: lacks realism, lacks spine to go against other’s will who oppose you

**Fear may still be present:** Fortitude frees us to act in face of fear, to hold our ground. Trusting self in face of evil = NOT wise / imprudent.

When can no longer attack, then only resort is to endure: this is when fortitude comes to the fore.

Pain of martyrdom = NOT romantic. Grace is ESSENTIAL. “I send you as sheep among wolves” (not “like sheep” “as if you were sheep,” but truly this is dangerous).

**Natural fortitude** (Greek bravery in battle) => **supernatural fortitude** against world, flesh, Satan; willingness to run the race with perseverance (cf. Letter to Hebrews; Heb 12)

“By your patient endurance will you save your souls” ( )

**Note:** Catechism (and the Wise!) describe the “battle of prayer.”

**Some Signs of struggle in fortitude:**
- Pouting (Ahab), anguish in anticipation of struggle (Anna, wife of Tobit).
- Overly eager to smooth over difficulties; fear of conflict (typical clergy fault, fault of parents).
- Making things out worse than they are (scouts from Canaan)
- Tattle-tales
- Giving kids what they want all the time.

**Growth:** Give a charge (what coach does at halftime); stand and join in alongside of; remind of God’s Providence.

Psalm 27

Sirach 2!
Allied virtues: magnanimity (striving for high and good things); magnificence (doing great things in great degree, especially if have the means); patience & forbearance of sorrow; perseverance in face of difficulty.

Gift of Holy Spirit: Fortitude, Fear of the Lord

V. The Virtue of Temperance: “personal Self-control, Self-mastery, moderation, balance”

A. Definition

Cardinal Virtue of Temperance, the virtue that enables us to act with self-control, right order, & moderation in use of all good pleasing things on our Journey. Perfects Will for ordering Passions in response to what is pleasing.

1809 Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." 72 Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." 73 In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world." 74

"To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only (God) (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence).” (Augustine)

B. Description & Characteristics

As co-creator with God, man delights in his interaction with creation—both outwardly (the good things about us) and inwardly (that which we can comprehend interiorly, especially in terms of beauty, the aesthetically pleasing, inner harmony, mastery).

Therefore man develops, builds, plants, designs, discovers, cooperates…and thus we have music, craft, architecture, science, beer, enterprise, philosophy, collective
undertaking (Symphony! Dance! Baseball, the most theological and poetic sport…)...and we delight, we respond with “how lovely, moving, pleasant, resonant, ‘Awesome!’, amazing….

The appetites are given us to encourage life, to make it flourish:
   Ecclesiastes 10:19 “Bread and oil call forth merriment and wine makes the living glad.”
   Ecclesiastes 5:17 “It is well for a man to eat and drink and enjoy all the fruits of his labor.”

Therefore: **we need to temper our response to the super-abundance of “good things,” the too many wonders to “take in”** (wine to appreciate, songs to sing, mountains to climb…)

And when we set no limits on experiencing those things, then the powers of the soul become **restless**, become **dissipated**, or, worse, become **enslaved to passing goods** rather than be effectively ordered toward the Greatest Good.

**Preface II for Lent:**
   “For you [Father] have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying their hearts, that, freed from disordered affections, they may so deal with the things of this passing world as to hold rather to the things that eternally endure.”

**The issue:** the squandering of self or the building up of self…for greater End.

**Temperance = ordered toward self-preservation**…but not for sake of pleasure, but for the greatness of life which is to love and serve God and others for the sake of God. It is self-less self-preservation.


**Temperance frees us from what would ensnare our energies so that our hunger for Life & Goodness & Happiness can effectively be directed toward our Highest End:** True Leisure, Contemplation (Prayer, adoration, the Beatific Vision).

If we do not channel the powers / “waters of life”, they dissipate. The issue is not order for order’s sake; the issue is ordering for effect, for freedom to rise to the End: **“You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”**

If we do **NOT** order ourselves toward this end, we WILL BE RESTLESS.

**This is why:** without True Leisure (Contemplation, Prayer), we experience restlessness, tension, blah-ness…and we go in seek of pleasure, “what pleases me,“
“what I like doing” and are satisfied...for a moment. When the satisfaction passes, we are left with nothing...but are no closer to our End that would bring us True Happiness.

How many activities, projects, hobbies, pleasant experiences, vacations, “getting away from it all” interludes, good activities we do because we like them, they don’t take effort (even “hard work” can be “effortless” because we like the experience of having worked hard)! And all in search of the ONE THING that ultimately satisfies: God Alone.

Ironically, by habituating ourselves to all these other good things (or, tragically, toward addicting psychosomatic sensations of alcohol, food, sex, drugs), we become incapable of being effectively ordered toward that which actually desire (but perhaps don’t realize it). “The young man knocking at the brothel door is seeking God.”

Temperance / moderation of the appetite for what is pleasing / self-control is a denial, a “no” in order to be free to say “yes”: self-less self-preservation.

Temperance includes:
- Proper shame, disgrace (sense of repulsion from “losing control”)
- Abstinence & fasting
- Sobriety
- Chastity according to one’s state in life (saying “yes” in right way, right time, toward right person):
  - Continence (ability to say “no” to sexual expression)
  - Modesty of attitude & mind
- Exterior modesty in dress & manner
- Meekness (rather than anger, disordered response to not having what pleases)
- Studiousness (focus of mind & study rather than dissipated curiosity)
- Humility: the accurate balanced moderate vision of self, in accord with one’s gifts and limitations

Temperance: an “all the time” virtue, since I’m with me all the time and I’m with creation all the time, and my interior appetites for what is pleasing to me are responding all the time to what is around me.

“All creation is good; it is not all for me.”

Self-mastery = participating in Jesus’ Kingship: kingship over myself.

My true might lies not just in doing, but in my vitality.

Ultimately, what I am like when no one is looking over my shoulder.

Scripture’s admonishment: embrace discipline, mortification.

Fast from food/ drink/ comfort
Embrace work
Listen to what other people say (and not only own thoughts, “what I want”)
Ask others first about themselves, their interests….
Ask Jesus what book to read…

**Intemperance leads to idolatry:** Solomon!

**Growth:** no hard and fast rules—again, the measure is within (examples).

**Accept therefore:**
- It is good; it is not “for me”
- Drudgery, toil, boredom is part of life in fallen world & is not simply to be escaped but is to be imbued with God’s Presence (the Friend of Jesus is ALWAYS at home, at rest, being refreshed by the Presence).
- “Just start” (rather than “later”): “I’ll do it later” leads to mountain of material.
- Start what I want to finish: don’t simply “take a break” but “take a ten-minute break” (i.e., finish the break)
- Do not pledge “never again” but pledge “today…”
- Therefore, daily examen (again, an “all the time” virtue):
- Ask: “What rationalization is involved in the indulgence?
- Abraham: “Ready!” = not focused on feeling, but on what needs to be done (reason & faith govern his perception of reality, not his feeling of pleasant or discomfort)

**Gift of Holy Spirit:** Fear of the Lord, the beginning of Wisdom

**The Battle of Prayer, the Habit of Prayer is one of greatest means to growth in temperance!**
- the habit itself strengthens the will in faith…
- orients us toward our Final End: Face to Face with God
- we come to see ourselves more truly
- we come to see reality more truly
- we gain a taste for deeper pleasures: Union with the One we love, even if no consolation.
- we learn to live without dependence on lesser / passing things (even spiritual consolations) for sake of Greatest Thing
- prayer unites, integrates us on all levels: it is Just and most Prudent, it strengthens Fortitude and Temperance in the doing, it is the exercise of Faith, Hope, and Love—and the greatest of these is LOVE!
St. Bonaventure’s Prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Lord Jesus, as God’s Spirit came down and rested upon you, may the same Spirit rest upon us, bestowing his sevenfold gifts. First, grant us the gift of understanding, by which your precepts may enlighten our minds. Second, grant us counsel, by which we may follow in your footsteps on the path of righteousness. Third, grant us courage, by which we may ward off the Enemy’s attacks. Fourth, grant us knowledge, by which we can distinguish good from evil. Fifth, grant us piety, by which we may acquire compassionate hearts. Sixth, grant us fear, by which we may draw back from evil and submit to what is good. Seventh, grant us wisdom, that we may taste fully the life-giving sweetness of your love.

-- St. Bonaventure (1217-1274)