

## THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

- The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity. 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.

### FAITH

- 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."<sup>78</sup> For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith."
- The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it.<sup>80</sup> But "faith apart from works is dead":<sup>81</sup> But 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.
- 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: "The person who believes 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."<sup>82</sup>
- 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."<sup>83</sup>

### HOPE

- Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our ultimate happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man. It keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude.
- 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 despite the trials which we encounter along the way. Hope affords us joy even under trial: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation."<sup>91</sup> Hope is expressed and nourished in prayer, especially in the Our Father, the prayer which Jesus gave us.
- We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will.<sup>92</sup> In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end"<sup>93</sup> and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved."<sup>94</sup>

She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

## CHARITY

- Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God.
- Jesus makes charity the *new commandment* because in loving one another, the disciples imitate the love which they already have received from Him. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; remain in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."<sup>98</sup>
- By keeping his commandments we prove we love God. "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love."<sup>99</sup>
- Christ died out of love for us, while we were still "enemies."<sup>100</sup> The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our *enemies*, to make ourselves the neighbour of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.<sup>101</sup>
- The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity:
- **"Charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices**

**in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things."**<sup>102</sup>

- The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity, which "binds everything together in perfect harmony".
- The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us".<sup>106</sup>
- If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages, we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him we are in the position of children.<sup>107</sup>