Notes from Fr. Nick

The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope & Love

Saint Paul tells us (1 Corinthians 13:13) that the virtues that come directly from God are faith, hope and love. **Faith** is steadfastness in belief. **Hope** is an expectation and desire of receiving, not giving up or falling into despair. **Love** is selfless, unconditional and voluntary kindness. What makes these theological virtues distinct from others? For example, how do they differ from the cardinal virtues—justice, fortitude, prudence and temperance?

Unlike other virtues, we cannot acquire the theological virtues through our own efforts. They are strictly gifts from God. We may exercise these virtues so that their true potential develops in our beings, but without God placing their essence in each of us, we would be incapable of living out our destiny as his sons and daughters.

Other humanly-acquired virtues run the risk of becoming vices; if carried to extreme: **Justice** can be coldhearted, **fortitude** might turn into stubbornness, too much **prudence** could lead to indecisiveness; and over-zealous **temperance** might starve a person.

On the other hand, the stronger our faith is, the deeper is our relationship with God. Enduring hope is not rose-colored optimism; it is, rather, the expectation that **all things ultimately resolve into God’s goodness**. Abundant love always enriches the hearts with whom it contacts and grows God’s presence in the world.

In a real sense, the theological virtues are mysteries of God’s presence within all of us. They are to be pondered rather than defined. Survey in yourself how you are actualizing these virtues that are the essence of your humanity.

"Together we share our faith in Jesus Christ. We live the Gospel, and we care for others."