

Moral virtue essay sample

[Religion](#), [God](#)



1. 0 INTRODUCTION

Man attains his ultimate end through good actions, that is, in conformity with law and his conscience. These good actions can be helped by good habits called virtues. Virtue is not something abstract possibly no term in the history of moral thought has stimulated more interest, reflection and speculation than that of virtue. Virtue is not something abstract and detached from life but on the contrary it has deep roots in life itself. It springs up from the latter and forms it. Virtue has an impact on man's life, on his actions and behavior. It serves the good of man and his true happiness even on earth¹. So in this paper I try to see the virtues, the meaning and the main virtues, importance of virtues in this present era and the key virtue and my favorite virtue also mentioned.

1. 1 THE MEANING AND DEFINITION OF VIRTUE

The word virtue comes from the Latin word for man and originally meant a good quality that humans (men) practice (manliness) and which makes them different than animals. Virtue can also mean moral excellence, uprightness, goodness, strength, courage, and worth and so on. Nowadays a virtue means a good quality that causes humans to help each other and to act for the good of their families and communities rather than just for what gives them personal pleasure. According to Catechism of Catholic Church no. 1803 " A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of him. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions".

A virtue is a “ power” (virtus), in the literal sense of the word. It is the power to accomplish moral good, and especially to do it joyfully and perseveringly even against inner and outer obstacles and at the cost of sacrifice. When that power is turned to evil it is called a vice. Virtues are powers rooted in the presence of God, in grace, that enable us to establish and nurture healthy and life giving relationship with God, the neighbor, the world and the self. They prompt us to act in such a way as to exclude extreme forms of action. Thus, the saying: in medio stat virtus, that is “ in middle stands virtue.” Genuine virtue flows from the correct fundamental option.

1. 2 VIRTUES IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

There is no Hebrew term in the OT that conveys the general meaning of virtue. While the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures were certainly aware of many human virtues, it was not until the OT was translated into Greek that the word arete (virtue or excellence) was used. The term is also infrequently used in the in the NT but possibly the reason for this because the NT authors may have thought that the word was too anthropocentric and stressed human achievement and merit. Whenever the word is used however it does not denote moral goodness. Though the word is used infrequently in NT it is more commonplace to find lists of virtues that describe moral existence in the early years of Christian community in the Pauline letters and in the pastoral letters.

2 1. 3 DIFFERENT KINDS OF VIRTUES

The virtues are infinite in number. We cannot count up all the virtues in general. But when we specify it we can emphasize certain virtues or we may make a distinction in virtues mainly on theological and cardinal virtues. We know different persons are fulfilling their lives by practicing certain virtues. So it varies person to person. Theology has traditionally distinguished between natural and supernatural virtues. But in light of our present understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, this hard and fast distinction needs to be understood in a different way. Supernatural virtues are not something added to natural virtues. On the other hand the distinction does remind us that virtue is rooted in human, not divorced from it. Another distinction is between acquired and infused virtues. Seen from the point of view of its source and rootedness, a virtue is "infused" by God. A third distinction is between theological (faith, hope and charity) and moral or cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude). The theological virtues are infused by God himself and it leads to the triune God. Scripture and tradition speak of a triad of such fundamental supernatural virtues which are specified by their being the basic modes of increasing acceptance of the divine self communication by grace and of directing man's spiritual, personal life towards God by sharing in God's life itself. This triad is found in the NT (1cor. 13: 13; 1Thes. 1: 3; 5: 8; Eph. 1: 15-18; Col. 1: 4f; Heb. 10: 22-24). They are called infinite virtues because their formal object is not a finite moral personal value but God himself, as he makes himself the life of man by his self communication. The cardinal virtues are also important in our day to day life to live a good moral life.

1. 4 MY FAVORITE VIRTUE - CHARITY

Love is the most important and key virtue, which I like the most. No virtue is more fully expressive of the relational model of the Christian moral life than charity, or love. We see that all of Jesus' moral teachings and those of the early church have been concentrated in the one commandment of love: love of God and love of neighbor (Mk. 12: 28-34; Mt. 22: 34-40; Lk. 10: 25-37; Gal. 5: 14, 1Cor. 13; 1 Jn. 3: 23). And we have seen that virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. And if we have love we will not do anything harmful to God or neighbor. St. Paul says " And now faith, hope and love abide these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1Cor. 13: 13). Love is lived faith and lived hope. The one virtue without the other two is radically incomplete, dead. Council of Trent teaches us the first and most necessary gift is charity by which we love god above all things and our neighbor because of him. 3 Let us see the word meaning of love. The word charity comes from the greek word charis which means grace(favour) or from the Latin word carum which means dear (of great value) both mean same thing grace is dear , that is of great value In English it has got only one meaning, but in Greek for love many words are used. For example Epithemia is desire, with the connotation of lust.

This is sexual love. Eros is the drive toward union with others which brings self-fulfillment. Philia is affectionate love such as that among brothers, sisters and friends. Agape is total dedication and devotion to the welfare or other, regardless of sacrifice and personal cost. Many experiences of authentic love by human beings will entail a proportionate blending of these

four elements. Christian love consists in an intimate participation in the life of God who is love (1Jn. 4: 8, 16). It is a gift from God that is mediated by Christ and activated by the Spirit. It calls us to share in the paschal mystery by which Christ handed himself over to death and therefore was raised from the dead and exalted by the Father (Phil. 2; 5-11). Christian love is rooted in the whole life, death and resurrection of Christ. He is model through his life of service (Mk. 10: 45), through his complete self giving on the cross, and through his passing over to the Father. Christian love is same self giving, even to the point of crucifixion. “ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn. 15: 13)⁴.

Charity is the last and the greatest of the three theological virtues; the other two are faith and hope. While it is often called love and confused in the popular understanding with common definitions of the latter word, charity is more than a subjective feeling or even an objective action of the will toward another person. Like the other theological virtues, charity is supernatural in the sense that God is both its origin and its object. As Fr. John A. Hardon, S. J., writes in his *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, charity is the “ infused supernatural virtue by which a person loves God above all things for his [that is, God’s] own sake, and loves others for God’s sake.” Like all virtues, charity is an act of the will, and the exercise of charity increases our love for God and for our fellow man; but because charity is a gift from God, we cannot initially acquire this virtue by our own actions. I think that if we practice the virtue love all other will follow automatically.

For example if I deeply and whole heartedly love a person I will be aware about him and his needs. Here the virtue love of neighbor is fulfilled. Again if I love a person I will speak him with patience and affection. And even if we are out of mood in the presence of dear friend we will try to be cool and gentle. So also if we are in angry mood we will have a certain amount of control over it in the behalf of our friend one who loves and loved. Moreover, we will be faith full to hiser physical or mental needs and even to the salvation of hiser soul. Finally it reaches to God. So it starts from God and passes through others and ends in God. I hope it is the vocation of our life we should have to fulfill. So whatever way we look at the virtue love it takes all other virtues together with it. That is why I pointed that by practicing the virtue love or charity we may accomplish all other virtues.

1. 5 THE RELEVANCE OF VIRTUE TODAY

This is a meaningful and valuable question to be asked in this fast moving world. Today the value of virtue is decreasing in our lives. Man is running after money, wealth and pleasure. We comfortably forget about the other even one's own blood relation. Today if we take a look at the news paper we could see a series of stories which will break our heart. Every moment we watch in the television murder, violence, cheating and all kinds of dehumanized actions done by the humankind. Here what we find is that the humankind is loosing his sense of acting good, good for others. Now man has shrunk into himself. He is not even open to his or her spouse even. He wants to lead a life of lavish, enjoying all kinds of pleasure and satisfaction. In this run he is not bothered about the other. What I pointing is that at present the

practice of virtue is getting out of date. But it doesn't mean that we need not practice virtues. But we have to restore the dignity of human being by practicing virtues. More over virtue help us to form our character and act good. Your character is the set of qualities that make you who you are.

The qualities that people would name when they describe you are what "characterize" you (could be good or bad) and make you a person who is different from anyone else. If your ethics cause you to do good things even when you might rather do something else, you are said to have a "good character." If you almost always make the same kinds of ethical choices, and don't let other people talk you into things that you believe are wrong, you are said to have a "strong character." Finally virtue is always concerned with personality as a whole, and with the whole personality in the context of its healthy and healing human relationships. The habit of charity is necessary by the necessity of means for all to attain salvation. The council of Trent teaches : for although no one can be just unless the merits of passion of our lord Jesus Christ are imparted to him still this communications takes place in the justification of the sinner.

1. 6 CONCLUSION

Theologians today give great importance to the fundamental attitude in man. A good fundamental option renders the whole man good. The individual acts are in general an expression of the fundamental option to be good or to be virtues in this sense there is only one virtue and it is manifested in different ways, thus we can speak of different virtues. Virtue is that something leads us to do good and avoid evil. A virtue can lead us to salvific

life or in the moral realm to lead a good life in the world. As we know today virtue is ignored by the people in this dynamic world. Each one is bothered about only his needs and pleasure. Here we find the authenticity of selfishness. However we have to rebuild the out dated values and truths into our lives. Above all we must remember that love of god and love of neighbor before being a commandment is a gift of grace from the lord it is god who give capacity to love. By practicing virtues we are becoming more aware that whenever true virtue is at home we also have strong, healthy, happy relations with nature and the with the whole creation includes ourselves and above all to God, as I mentioned our goal of life is to end in God. I am quite sure that virtue can lead us to that ultimate reality the God.

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