

The Virtue of Prudence and Justice

I. The Virtue of Prudence

A. Definition

- a. It is infused into the practical intellect for right concrete action in view of supernatural end
 1. it is a fulcrum for all other moral virtues
 2. it points out the just mean for all moral actions
 3. without prudence no virtue can become perfect

B. Importance

- a. Helps one to avoid sin
- b. Judges what should be done to grow in sanctification
- c. Assists in the apostolate

C. Vices opposed

a. Imprudence

1. precipitation
 - acting without attention to proper steps and proper deliberation
2. inconsideration
 - a spurning of making a judgment or no attention to it
3. inconstancy
 - the abandoning of a good judgment because of some difficulty

b. Negligence

1. A failure to even command the action

c. False prudence

1. carnal prudence
2. craftiness
3. guile
4. fraud
5. lack of confidence in divine providence

D. Method of Progress

- a. Beginners – the virtue of prudence is often lacking in the young due to a lack of experience and the predominance of emotions over reason
 1. avoid sins that are opposed to prudence mentioned above
 2. Practice referring all actions to the ultimate end – ask the question: “*Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?*”
- b. Advanced Souls
 1. seek God’s glory
 2. practice choosing the greater good
 3. intensify practice of self-denial and mortification

II. The Parts of Prudence

A. Integral Parts (elements which are required for the perfection of a given virtue)

- a. Memory of the past – one must learn from experience
- b. Understanding of the present – to judge the morality and/or fittingness of a given act in the present

- c. Docility – willingness for the inexperienced to accept the counsel and advice of the experienced
- d. Sagacity – ability to act rightly in an urgent situation where no time is available
- e. Reasoning power – ability to give required deliberation and consideration when time affords opportunity
- f. Foresight – need to judge means in view of end
- g. Circumspection – take into account special circumstances surrounding a given act
- h. Precaution – consideration of possible obstacles exterior or interior to oneself due to weakness, etc.

III. The Virtue of Justice

A. Definition

- a. Supernatural habit which inclines the will constantly and perpetually to render to each one what is due in the strict sense
 - 1. it perfects the will
 - 2. it always involves reference to another, strict obligation, and exact adequation
 - 3. it prepares the way for peace, the tranquility of order
- b. Parts of Justice
 - 1. refraining from doing evil to one's neighbor
 - 2. doing the required good to one's neighbor
 - 3. religion – cult due to God
 - 4. piety – duties towards one's parents
 - 5. observance, dulia, obedience – obligations towards a superior
 - 6. gratitude – benefits received
 - 7. vindication – just punishment
 - 8. truth, affability, liberality – with social relations
 - 9. equity – ability to depart from the letter of the law in order to preserve the law's spirit

B. Means of Progressing in Justice

- a. Negative Means
 - 1. avoid all injustices, however slight
 - 2. avoid unnecessary debts and pay existing debts promptly
 - 3. treat another's possessions as one's own
 - 4. protect and defend the good name of others
 - 5. avoid any kind of preference of persons or human respect
- b. Positive Means
 - 1. rendering our neighbor his due – commutative justice
 - 2. judge in favor of society or organization, etc. as a whole in making decisions
 - 3. be solicitous to fulfill one's obligations to the law of society

IV. Have I been prudent? Do I love prudently? Have I given adequate consideration to the past? Have I looked with foresight to the future? Am I a just man? In what ways have I been unjust? Have I stolen and justified it? Did I make restitution? Have I detracted? What needs to be “made right”?