

HEROIC VIRTUE



LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

CCC 1803 CCC 1822
CCC 1806-1809
CCC 1812-1813
CCC 1814
CCC 1817

John 13:14, 15:13-16
Philippians 4:8
Romans 5:1-8
1 Corinthians 9:22-27, 13:1-13

2 Corinthians 12:9-10
Hebrews 11
1 John 4:16
Joshua 24:15

7. Which X-Men character has to wear glasses to control his laser-vision?
Cyclops

8. Who is the Powerpuff Girls' main enemy?
Mojo Jojo

Name the Fantastic Four.

The Human Torch, The Thing, Mr. Fantastic, The Invisible Woman

This teaching should cover the basics of virtue and specifically the theological virtues. The presenter should adapt the following outline to make it engaging and relevant for the teens.

Begin by asking the teens what a virtue is. Next, ask them whom they would call a virtuous person.

Definition: A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good (CCC 1803). What does this mean? All these fancy words can get in the way of a very simple definition. A virtue is a way of life that helps us do what is right in any situation. The word virtue means “valor,” “merit” or “moral perfection.” A virtuous person is someone who chooses to do good at all times, no matter the circumstances or situations.

For many of us, we think that we must be holy to be able to live a life full of virtue. Fortunately for us this is a misconception on how virtue works. Put simply, God endows us with the virtues in order to help us become like Christ. If we really want to become all God has designed us and called us to be, the virtues are the path by which we do so. The virtues are how we unleash the full power of God's grace. It's through virtue that we are able to live up to our fullest potential and it is through virtue that we become saints.

The path of virtue is the path to true joy and freedom. When we are living a virtuous life, we are saying, “God, I’m going to do everything I can to live for you; and I need your help.” When we are willing to ask the Lord for His help and grace, we are able to experience true joy and freedom.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa said, “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.” It is through virtue that we reach our highest excellence and moral perfection. It is through virtue that we put grace, God’s very life within us, into action.

The theological virtues are virtues that help us to participate in God's nature and live in relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are "theological" because they will always point us to a deeper union with God and help us understand who He is. They are free gifts from God; we do not earn or merit them.

What are they? There are three theological virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity (or Love)

Faith can seem difficult to define. We know that in his letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul tells us “Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and the evidence of things unseen” (11:1). Some even say, “faith is blind.” But what is faith really?

Faith is the virtue that by “which we believe in God and believe in all that he as said and revealed to us” (CCC 1814). Faith is a gift from God that helps us have complete confidence that God really is who He says He is. Faith is not blind. It is certain. Faith works together with hope and charity to help us live more fully united to God. Faith demands a profession not just with our words but also with our whole life. It calls us to witness with our lives.

We have to look no further for examples of faith than Abraham and Moses. God asked both of these men to complete what seemed like impossible tasks, but because of their complete trust and confidence in God's promises, they acted in faith.

For all of us, God will call us to a task that seems impossible, but we have a choice. We can act in faith, in complete trust of God, or we can let fear conquer faith.

Often, we understand hope as simply wishful thinking. Hope has become “I wish” instead of “I know.” The virtue of hope helps us desire eternal life with God in heaven and place our trust in God’s promises. Hope is rooted in our deep faith in Jesus Christ and looks to the promise of heaven that He gave us. The fact that we know His love,

Life Night on the Virtues

LIFE NIGHT OUTLINE

feel His presence and live to do His will is proof that we have an inner hope in our hearts. This hope is not just one in which we trust in tomorrow but rather one that looks to eternity with Christ.

St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans “hope does not disappoint” (5:5). What do you think he meant by this? (Have a few teens answer). St. Paul means that when we place our trust in God’s promises and the plan He has for our lives, we will never be disappointed. He will always be with us.

God made promises that Abraham would be the father of many nations and Moses would lead the Israelites out of slavery into the Promised Land. Although these men never lived to see the promises completely fulfilled, they lived their lives with the hope, the “I know” that God would fulfill his promises.

God has promised us that we would be with him in heaven. Are we living our lives with “I wish” hope or the “I know” hope?

3. Charity (CCC 1822-29)

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells his disciples: *I give you a new commandment: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you should also love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (13:14).*

Charity is not only the greatest commandment but also the greatest of all the virtues. Charity is the virtue by which we love God above all things and love our neighbor as God loves us. Charity is the virtue that animates and inspires all the other virtues. This virtue takes our imperfect human love, perfects it and raises it to supernatural love. It is this virtue in particular that helps us live a life fully for God.

St. Paul gives us the greatest definition of charity:
Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not
arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not
irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices
in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all
things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7)

This theological virtue calls us to mirror God's love for us. Through charity we are called to love those who are the hardest for us to love, die to ourselves and use our lives as a sacrifice for others. This is why charity is the greatest of all the virtues. It helps us become the most like God, who, at His very being is Love.

Charity is also the hardest to practice. Who in your life is the hardest for you to love? Who has hurt you the most? Betrayed you? Forgotten you? Who is that one person who annoys you constantly? Charity calls us to love even those who have wounded and hurt us the most.

C. Cardinal Virtues

After the theological virtues, we have four Cardinal virtues. The word cardinal means “hinge” or “pivot.” These virtues play a central (or pivotal) role in our pursuit of holiness and joy. The cardinal virtues are: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. We are going to spend the rest of the night discussing these four specific virtues.

BREAK 30 minutes

SMALL GROUPS (25 min)

Break the teens up into small groups. If small groups are not set for the year, encourage the teens to break away from their friends or normal small group leader. Each small group leader should receive the small group portion of this night at least one week in advance to prepare. He/She should spend time reading through the Catechism references to get a better understanding of each virtue. He/She should also be prepared to answer questions from the teens. The small groups will look at each cardinal virtue and answer the questions “what is the virtue?” and “what are some every day situations to practice this virtue?”

After each explanation, ask the teens to come up with sample situations where they can use the virtue. Encourage them to think of situations that do not seem obvious.

The cardinal virtue explanation can be found on page 12.

LARGE GROUP SHARING (5 min)

Gather all the groups back together. The youth minister should ask a few of the small groups to share their example situations for each of the virtues. Try to get a variety of situations.

SEND 20 minutes

HEROIC VIRTUE (5 min)

Set the room the room with an atmosphere of prayer by lowering the lights and having soft music playing in the background. If possible, have the music minister available for the night to lead the teens in worship. The youth minister should recap the night reminding the teens that a virtuous life is not an effect of being holy but a way to help us become holy. He/She should discuss how living a virtuous life is heroic and saintly. Use the following quote to help drive home the point:

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's efforts; from this 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 to not be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence). (CCC 1809)

PRAYER FOR VIRTUES (15 min)

On the screen display the following Scripture verse:

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8

Core should form seven prayer groups (two or three people each) around the room. If there are not enough Core members available, invite a few parents or upperclassmen to help. Assign each group a specific virtue and have them stand by that virtue's sign on the wall. The groups should know which virtue they will be praying for before the night. The youth minister should instruct the teens to take a few minutes to reflect on which virtue God is calling them to dive into deeper. Point out the seven different stations around the room and that each one is assigned to a particular virtue. Invite the teens, when they are ready, to come to the prayer station for the virtue they feel God is calling them to. The Core should pay extra attention to the teens that come to their station. They should follow up with those teens in the next week to ask how they are living out that virtue.

Close the night with prayer and the Hail Mary and Ave Maria.

THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

PRUDENCE (CCC 1806)

The word prudence comes from the Latin word for “foreseeing.” Another word for prudence is wisdom. Simply, prudence is “practical reason.” Prudence is the virtue that directs the rest of the cardinal virtues. The virtue of prudence means acting with thoughtfulness and wisdom, or showing care not only for the immediate but also for the future. When you practice the virtue of prudence you consider the outcome of every action—both good and bad—and set your heart on the good in all things. Prudence goes beyond just making impulsive decisions to making decisions that affect eternity for both yourself and others.

What are some sample situations you can use this virtue in?
Try to think of a situation that might not seem obvious.

JUSTICE (CCC 1807)

The virtue of justice helps us give to others and God what they are due. It is a virtue of selfless service. The virtue of justice calls each of us to treat all human life equally. In a sense, the virtue of justice is a call to missionary life. It calls us to serve not only the poor and lonely in the world, but even those in our own schools, neighborhoods and homes. It is a call to love even those who are the hardest for us to love.

What are some sample situations you can use this virtue in?
Try to think of a situation that might not seem obvious.

FORTITUDE (CCC 1808)

The word fortitude comes from the Latin word *fortitudo* meaning “strong.” Another word for fortitude is courage. The virtue of fortitude helps us overcome difficult situations and resist temptation. It helps us overcome fears, obstacles and persecution. Fortitude gives us strength that moves and motivates us to remain firm and pursue what is good and holy. The virtue requires sacrifice and willingness to push yourself.

What are some sample situations you can use this virtue in?
Try to think of a situation that might not seem obvious.

TEMPERANCE (CCC 1809)

The word temperance comes from the Latin word *temperare* meaning “restrain.” Another word for temperance is moderation or self-control. The virtue of temperance helps you restrain desires and set them on God and what is truly good. Temperance helps us moderate our attraction of pleasures (sex, alcohol, vanity, shopping, boyfriends/girlfriends) and provides a balance of all created desires. Temperance requires discipline, self-control, and even in some cases abstinence from certain objects, activities and even people. Temperance is a virtue given to you by God to help you live a disciplined, well-ordered and free (from addictions, vanity, sin) life.

What are some sample situations you can use this virtue in?
Try to think of a situation that might not seem obvious.
