



## **High School Lesson Plan**

***"I live, now not I; but Christ lives in me." Gal. 2:20***

### **Purpose:**

Upon completion of this lesson, students will have a deeper appreciation for:

- 1) Striving to live a life of virtue as the response to God's gracious gift of life and our response to the call to be a disciple of Christ.
- 2) The saints who have gone before us went above and beyond a regular life of virtue, achieving heroic virtue in their union with Christ.
- 3) A life of sanctity is something that can be achieved in life today.

### **Catechetical:**

The word 'virtue' derives from the Latin *virtus* which connotes courage, even reaching back to the writings of Cicero in Latin's Golden Age. Today, virtue, in its widest sense, means 'the excellence or perfection of a thing.' Striving to live a life of virtue is striving to build up the habit of doing good, where goodness flows from the person without even thinking. On the contrary is *vice* where the person falls into the habit of evil. Virtue, to the Catholic Christian, is to be the pattern of life by which one responds to the demands of the modern world while still reaching for personal holiness and perfection.

The seven virtues are traditionally divided into the moral virtues and theological virtues. The moral virtues are derived from right reason and have been discerned by the philosophers; while the theological virtues have been informed by the Revelation brought about by Jesus Christ.

The four moral virtues:

- *Prudence*: As defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, prudence is the 'right method of conduct.' It is the struggle to act in a manner consistent with our Christian beliefs. It is the ability to make the correct decision when facing a matter of choice. Prudence has as its goal the acting out of the other virtues, hence it is seen not only as moral but also intellectual. The opposite of prudence is viciousness.
- *Justice*: As we are essentially persons in community with one another, justice orders our dealings with our brothers and sisters. This virtue forms in the Disciple an inherent respect for the rights of others. It is here that we live out Jesus' command that 'no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend.' As a response to justice, we recognize that we have been given many good gifts by God and our proper response is one of gratitude for the gifts received. The opposite of justice is narcissism.
- *Temperance*: The life of moderation is guided by the virtue of temperance in which reason trumps the voracious appetite of pleasure. Temperance enables the Christian to avoid the excesses and traps of modern materialism while also finding joy in the hidden pleasures of life. It is in this virtue that the Beatitudes, as articulated in the Sermon on the Mount, are lived out in daily life. The opposite of temperance is concupiscence, the blind giving into the appetite of the flesh.
- *Fortitude*: Going against one's own inclination of self preservation, fortitude is the virtue of bravery and having the strength of courage to live up to the difficult demands of discipleship, especially when it is uncomfortable or dangerous. This virtue encourages



the disciple: to reach out for greatness; to live out the faith in bold and dynamic ways; to desire first and foremost the Kingdom of God and its righteousness; and to see the endeavors begun through to their final completion.

The three theological virtues:

- *Faith*: A free gift from God, the virtue of faith helps the mind see into the supernatural, into the very nature of our Triune God. With faith, we are able to read Divine Revelation and be moved in spirit to accept the mission God has set forth for each of us in our own unique way.
- *Hope*: Directed towards the future fulfillment of the faith we profess, hope orients the believer toward union with God in heaven. The virtue of hope directs the will to long for the Beatific Vision, as outlined by St. Thomas Aquinas, as the goal of the Christian's life, to build a home not just here on earth, but an everlasting dwelling in heaven.
- *Charity*: In charity, the ultimate end of every Christian's life is achieved: union with God. According to St. Paul, this is the greatest of all gifts, for it is the one gift that finds its perfection and fulfillment in heaven. As Pope Benedict XVI described in his encyclical, *God is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*, this is the ultimate gift of love because in charity does the person sacrifice of themselves for the other, living out Jesus' great command: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for a friend." It is in the perfection of charity that we seek God in and of Himself, for He is the perfection of goodness.

For a further discussion on Virtue, see: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm>

### **Activity/Assignment:**

The saints are not just those who have gone before and lived lives of holiness, but remain present to us in communion, giving us the example and guidance to follow them into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. However, there is no one path to follow to holiness. Each saint developed his or her own unique relationship with Jesus, allowing it to be formed by the gifts of their unique personalities and situations in life. Therefore, a married mother will have a different path to holiness than a missionary priest. Yet, the pursuit of virtue and the perfection of virtue are what unite the saints in their path to holiness and happiness.

As the Second Vatican Council reiterated, every Christian receives this same call to holiness, this same call to embrace a life of virtue and to be a living example of Christ in the world. In this call to holiness, the saints exemplify the *heroic virtue* that more closely unites them with Christ.

**As an assignment**, have your students research a saint canonized by either Pope John Paul II or Pope Benedict XVI, specifically looking for the virtue which this particular saint exemplified in a heroic way in his or her life. To help encourage the student to live out this virtue in the present day, part of their report should focus on how the student can live out this virtue in his or her life. This page: [http://www.vatican.va/news\\_services/liturgy/saints/index\\_saints-blesseds\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/index_saints-blesseds_en.html), lists Saints and Blesseds by date of canonization. (Click on the word "Saints" or "Blesseds" to be taken to different lists – John Paul II became Pope in October of 1978.)

### **Further Suggestions:**

1. See the **Youth Ministry Program** to supplement this outline.
2. A virtuous life leads to a life of obedience to God's will. Discuss this connection with your students since it is in following God's will for our lives that we become truly happy.



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3. For extra credit, have the students complete the **Know Your Saints and Blesseds Quiz** from the Junior High Lesson Plan.

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