

# Moral Good

*These notes are derived from Catholic Morality by Fr. John Laux.  
Section I, Chapter II: Moral Good, pp 25-36.*

## Conditions of Moral Goodness

For a Moral act to be good it must have a good object, good intention, and good circumstances.

- **Object** — The specific act, word, or thought that is being chosen.
- **Intention** — The purpose or motivation for doing an act. (Also called the 'end')
- **Circumstance** — Events that surround the act matter and influence its morality.

For a sin to be mortal, it must involve a **grave matter**, and must be done with **full knowledge** of its sinfulness and **consent of the will**.

- **Object** — The **grave matter** of a sin relates to the seriousness of the act itself.
- **Intention** — The **consent of the will** to a grave sin relates to the **bad intent**.
- **Circumstance** — The **full knowledge** of a sin coincides with circumstances of act.

Some acts are so serious they are mortal, regardless of intent. Good motivations cannot make an inherently bad act moral.

## Virtue

**Virtue** is firm and permanent disposition to perform good acts. A single good act does not make one virtuous.

- **Natural virtues** are the result of good acts frequently repeated.
- **Supernatural virtues** are infused by grace and must be cultivated
- **Theological virtues** have God for their immediate object: **Faith, Hope, and Charity**
- **Cardinal virtues** regulate our duties to our fellow men and all of creation: **Prudence, Courage, Justice, and Temperance**

## Cardinal Virtues

- **Prudence** — Ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason. Related virtues are **Wisdom, Understanding, Insight, Knowledge**.
- **Justice** — Determination to give everyone his or her rightful due. Related virtues are **Piety, Obedience, Gratitude, Kindness, Mercy, Truthfulness**.
- **Temperance** — Voluntary self-restraint and moderation of appetites. Related virtues are **Chastity, Modesty, Humility**.
- **Courage** — Willingness to confront difficulties, either physical or moral. Related virtues **Patience, Magnanimity, Perseverance, Endurance**.
  - **Physical courage** is bravery in the face of pain, hardship, or danger.
  - **Moral courage** is willingness to act rightly in spite of opposition, popular opinion, or discouragement.

## Virtues Opposed to Capital Sins

Capital Sin	Opposing Virtues	Definition
Lust	<b>Chastity, Purity</b>	Discretion of sexual conduct according to state in life.
Gluttony	<b>Temperance, Abstinence</b>	Restraint, self-control, moderation, deferred gratification.
Greed	<b>Charity, Generosity</b>	Love of neighbor, self-sacrifice, unselfishness, Love of God.
Sloth	<b>Diligence, Persistence, Effort</b>	Zealousness and care in one's actions, perseverance, work ethic.
Wrath	<b>Patience, Forgiveness, Mercy</b>	Peace-seeking and willingness to bear wrongs. Forbearance, Moderation, Equanimity,
Pride	<b>Humility, Modesty, Reverence</b>	Spirit of self-examination, willingness graciously accept sacrifice.

## Christian Perfection

The Catholic Church upholds ideals of moral perfection that extend to self-sacrifice and self-denial in service to God's will. Jesus developed many ideas of Christian perfections on the **Sermon on the Mount**.

**Evangelical Counsels** are vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience that are taken by most of those in religious life in order to achieve perfection in the service of God and one's neighbor. Commandments prescribe what is necessary and applies to all. Counsels encourage what is more difficult, and apply only to those bound by voluntary vows.

- **Voluntary Poverty** — Vow commits religious to overcome attachment to earthly goods and covetousness.
- **Perpetual Chastity** — Vow commits religious to overcome attachment to sensual pleasures and impulses, and promotes purity of heart and thoughts.
- **Perfect Obedience** — Vow commits religious to overcome willfulness, pride, and self-love.