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Conference on “All Things Made New”; Day Dedicated to the Renewal of Self

“Make Every Effort To Supplement Your Faith With Virtue” (2 Pet 1:5): The Virtues as the “Seed and Fruit” of Continuous Christian Renewal.

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- Introduction

- It is a great joy for me to be here at the Napa Institute and a real privilege to be asked to speak. I thank Father Spitzer, Tim Busch, John Meyer, and their team for the invitation to speak at this conference dedicated to how Jesus, who said to us in the Book of Revelation, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5) wants to renew each one of us and through us the Church and American Society.
- Last week at daily Mass we heard Jesus’ words, “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). It’s a terrible translation. When we hear the word rest, we think about naps and vacation. The Latin Vulgate is “remake” you, the Greek is “refresh.” The one who makes all things new wishes to restore us, to reform and reshape us, to rekindle and resuscitate us. In this Year of St. Joseph in which we ponder how God the Father entrusted his only begotten Son to Saint Joseph, we see that according to his humanity Jesus learned from Joseph how to be a *tektion*, a builder. And Jesus as a *tektion* in Nazareth was doing far more than making yokes, tables, benches, wheels and houses. He was rebuilding the human race. And he never ceases to renew and renovate the Church he has built.
- Church history teaches us this over and again. At the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a time of great corruption in the Church and society, a young party animal named Giovanni Bernardone was praying in a dilapidated Church in front of a painted crucifix. From that crucifix Jesus suddenly called out to him by his nickname, which came from the fact that his mother was French, and said “Francis, rebuild my house that you can see is falling into ruin!” The man who became eventually Saint Francis of Assisi thought the Lord was asking him to repair the crumbling Church of St. Damian. So he hocked some of his father’s valuable fabrics and sold them along with his horse to start repairing the Church.
- But little did *il poverello* know that he had misinterpreted the Lord and that the Crucified Jesus had another, far more extensive, rebuilding project in mind. That project started with Francis himself, who responded to God’s grace to give up his hedonism and vanity and unite himself through the evangelical counsels to the poor, chaste and obedient Jesus. Soon many others joined Francis in this new life.
- Eventually they went to Rome to seek the approval of their statutes. The night before they were going to seek an audience with Pope Innocent III, the pontiff had a dream and saw a poor man in a primitive woolen habit with a rope for a belt holding up the Archbasilica of St. John in the Lateran, the Pope’s Cathedral, next to the papal residence at the time. The following day Innocent III saw the very man from his dream enter, surrounded by his closest followers. Pope Innocent properly interpreted the dream he had received: St. Francis of Assisi was being called by the divine *Tekton* to rebuild the Church as a whole, the entire household of God, symbolized by the Cathedral of St. John in the Lateran.
- St. Peter presented the Church’s basic architectural plans in his first letter: “Come to [Christ], a living stone, rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ himself is the foundation of the Church, the cornerstone. And the Church is the spiritual house built not of marble, wood, bricks and glass but men, women, boys and girls, living, breathing, believing stones whose life is built on Christ.
- If you go to Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome, you see the execution of Christ’s perpetual renovation plan depicted in art and architecture. The present Basilica of Saint Peter was constructed between

1506-1626, and decorated over the course of the succeeding century, and it was a visual response to the Protestant Reformation that had begun in 1517. One of the great joys of my priesthood is to have taken more than 10,000 people on visits of the Basilica and to the tomb of St. Peter on which the Basilica is erected.

- There are so many elements I would like to describe, but two are key for our talk this afternoon.
- The first is the placement of the saints. Just like over the 140 columns in Bernini's famous colonnade in St. Peter's Square the Church has placed 140 saints influential in building the Church of Rome, to show they are the true pillars in the spiritual house that is the Church, so inside the Basilica, in the enormous foundational pillars, we have huge statues of the saints who have founded religious orders that have been instrumental in rebuilding the Church after the scandals that led to the Reformation. Many of these saintly founders come from the 1500s, some from before whose orders shone during the counter-reformation, and others from centuries afterward, including our own St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, but their placement clearly conveys that the only rebuilding worthy of Christ is a reconstruction through holiness of life. Every reform that the Church needs is one that calls us back to taking seriously the foundation of the Christian life, that Jesus calls us to be saints and experience and share the fullness of the Christian life.
- The second element is just as important, theologically and architecturally, but few visitors and guides spend much time on it. In the spandrels coming off the arches throughout the Basilica, the Church has placed 28 different statues depicting the virtues. The virtues are all depicted allegorically, with symbolism that for many stretches back to before Christianity. Since the virtues are meant to be beautiful and attractive, they were all depicted as ... women, who have likewise traditionally been considered to be more faithful and constant than men. If you look up toward these structural arches you'll see statues depicting Faith, Hope, Charity, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Humility, Patience, Mercy, Compassion, Generosity, Chastity, Obedience, Constancy and others. They have been placed in the spandrels because the arches on which they rest uphold the roof, they counter the force of gravity, indicating that the virtues push us upward. They rebuild the Church by renewing us, drawing us from horizontal worldliness and elevating us to seek in action the things that are above.
- But that's not the only place that the allegorical virtues are depicted. Throughout the Basilica, at the tombs or monuments of Popes, the deceased pontiffs are depicted with two notable virtues on their side, the virtues by which they, or their successors who finished their monuments, wanted them to be remembered. Alexander VII, for example, who tried unsuccessfully to reconcile the Church of England, ended up wanted to be remembered for Charity and Divine Justice as Bernini depicted his big toe stepping on an island to the east of Ireland. Gregory XIII, the Pope most famous for reforming the calendar in 1582 giving us our leap years, wanted to be remembered for the virtues of Vigilance and Contemplation, both in prayer as well as through pondering the stars. This shows us that each of us, as Christians, is meant to be remembered for our virtues, the virtues that not only lift us up but lift up the Church and the world.
- Renewal through Virtue
  - I've entitled this talk "Make Every Effort To Supplement Your Faith With Virtue," taken from St. Peter's words to the first Christians (2 Pet 1:5). Everything starts with faith, but it doesn't end there. Living faith, as St. Paul and St. James both remind us, is revealed working through love. But we could also say with St. Peter that faith is manifested through virtue. Faith changes us. It informs our actions. And like we witnessed in the story of St. Francis of Assisi or can see in the beauty of St. Peter's, the renewal of virtuous faith in the living stones of the Church is where Christ begins his reform. The reform of the Church, the regeneration of American Society, begins in the renewal of each one of us.
  - We often resist this reality. It's easier, when we look at the enormous problems challenging the Church and society, to pass the responsibility for fixing it to others, to point accusatory fingers at those we blame, and to stay on the sidelines or hide behind imaginary monastic walls. That's not Christ's way. It's not the Church's way. Christ calls each of us to be salt, light and leaven and sends us out as his rebuilding crew.
  - Many of you may remember the famous story told about G.K. Chesterton, when the *Times of London* was soliciting essays on "What's Wrong with the World Today." Chesterton is said to have

responded with a one-sentence answer: “Dear Sir, I am. Yours, G.K. Chesterton” He recognized that the renewal of British society and the remedying of its manifold weaknesses would begin with his fixing himself.

- In the Gospel, Jesus gives us similar advice. He tells us, “Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove that splinter from your eye,’ while the wooden beam is in your eye? You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye” (Mt 7:3-5). The best way we’re going to see clearly to help the Church and our country reform is through a purified vision, through personal conversion, so that we’re able to help others in charity and virtue rather than out of pride.
- Jesus, the builder, was constantly reminding us of the difference each one of us can make living the Christian life. When people worried about mountain ranges of obstacles, Jesus said, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,” you can move mountains, and he used the mustard seed again to describe the growth of his kingdom from something small and seemingly insignificant to something that could eventually accommodate all the birds of the air. Our faith, even if we think it’s small and insignificant, can make an enormous difference. Our virtue, even if still very much under construction, can buttress others. In the Communion of Saints, we know that every action strengthens the whole. Jesus has us focus on what we can do even with a little faith, conscious of what a teenage girl in Nazareth, his mother, was able to accomplish with just a fiat, one that allowed God’s will to be done through her.
- So the Christian response to the problems is not to cry out, “When is someone going to do something about this?,” or even, “How long, O Lord.” It’s to say, with Isaiah, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” But in order to be an effective part of the solution, we need to respond to the problems with virtue.
- You name the problem facing society; at its root there is almost always a lack of virtue: cowardice, dishonesty, anger and hatred, addictions, overeating and drinking, using and abusing others, laziness, sexual objectification, disloyalty, envy, greed, impatience, vanity, untrustworthiness, irresponsibility, pride.
- Similarly within the Church, the problems in her teaching, sanctifying and shepherding offices are all ultimately traceable to breakdowns in virtuous behavior, to people not doing and living as they profess to believe. Rather than taking the easy way out and focusing first on the pope, or the clergy, or Catholic universities, Christ is calling us to hear him calling us by name. To ask, with regard to the Church’s teaching office, “How am I doing in understanding and passing on the treasure of the faith?” With regard to her worship, “How am I in taking advantage of the gift of the sacraments and drawing others to them?” With regard to governance, “How am I in self-mastery, and in leading by serving?”
- Virtues
  - Virtues are what help us to do this. They are the tools necessary for making, repairing and renewing Christian life. Virtues are habitual and firm dispositions to do the good. They not only improve what we do, but who we are, forging our character through perfecting our mind and will, ordering our emotions, and guiding our conduct. St. Gregory of Nyssa, a great fourth century doctor of the Church, once said that “in a certain way we are our parents,” because by our actions we form our second nature, for good or ill. Virtues are like moral muscles that help us to become truly free and mature through self-mastery. They are the root and fruit of repeated good actions.
  - Yet, despite all of those benefits, we’re not living in an age that esteems and cultivates virtue. Instead of virtue, many speak about “values,” which are basically subjective “attitudes.” It’s sad to see that even sometimes Catholic institutions emphasize “Catholic values,” which are basically a run around from talking about Catholic teaching, especially Catholic moral teaching. Rather than forming virtue, educators and cultural protagonists try to clarify the values people should have, what opinions about right and wrong they ought to own and share. Even when the word virtue is mentioned, like in the expression “virtue signaling,” it’s more accurate to say, “value signaling,” since it normally means trying to advertise how woke one is about a particular cultural situation.
  - Where did the change from virtue to value come from?

- Alasdair McIntyre, whose work *After Virtue* marks its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, said it happened because of enlightenment philosophy's excessive turn toward subjectivity and to the shift from reason to emotion. Moral philosophy therefore became irrational, concerned about subjective feelings or opinions rather than about the rationally discernible end of human happiness and the choices and habits — the virtues — necessary to attain happiness. As a result, public morality became reaching consensus about rules of interaction, based on an emotivism geared toward not hurting anyone else's feelings.
  - Father Servais Pinckaers, the great post-Vatican II Dominican moral theologian, argues that that shift from virtues to values happened because of a distortion of the notion of freedom going back even before the enlightenment, to William of Ockham, and to Ockham's exaltation of the will over reason. Freedom became the capacity to choose between different alternatives rather than the ability to choose the true and good. This freedom of indifference, he said, led to moralities of obligation, in contrast to "freedom for excellence," which fosters moralities of happiness and the virtues that lead to it. This corrupted notion of freedom grounded everything on a person's intentions and justified any seemingly well-intentioned license. Not only did that lead to moral relativism based on subjectivity, but it also induced a focus on the "values" that inform the intentions. Without objective truth about human behavior, all that's left is values, consensus, and rules that seek to form and prevent others' freedom not to violate your rights. Today this emotivist approach to values has reduced moral behavior essentially to being "nice," understood as making others feel comfortable, because all goods have been basically reduced to pleasure, comfort and contentment.
  - So, in short, the shift from virtues to values has a long history. But it has been accelerated in recent decades as part of the attempt to supplant traditionally Christian morality as the lingua franca of ethical decision-making in order to try to justify things that are unjustifiable, such as the intentional abuse of freedom to take the life of a younger, smaller, totally vulnerable human being in the womb, or to treat as sacred and good what has always been considered sinful and selfish, most notably the multiple forms of sex without commitment impersonating love that have been spurred on by the sexual revolution. To protect those who made such choices from feeling shame about them, interiorly through conscience or exteriorly through shame and others' judgment, the categories of morality needed to be shifted away not just from Jewish and Christian sources, but those of most other religions and even philosophical schools stretching back to Aristotle. A "values" based ethic allowed people to make such choices and still feel they're a "good person."
    - Personal renewal, the renewal of the Church and the renewal of American society involves a rebirth of virtue.
- Virtues are the way of Christ
  - To speak about virtue is to enter into the heart of Christian morality.
  - The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "The theological virtues are the foundation of Christian moral activity; they animate it and give it its special character" (CCC 1813). It adds, "The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God" (CCC 1803).
  - Many Christians think that Christian morality is fundamentally about the commandments. Jesus says that the law and the prophets hang on the two-fold command to love God with all of our mind, heart, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mt 22:40). When Jesus is asked by the Rich Young Man the path to heaven, he replies by saying, "If you wish to enter into life keep the commandments" and then, when prodded, names the Fourth through Eighth" (Mt 19:16-19). He even gives us a "new" commandment which he says is "my commandment" to "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34; Jn 15:12).
  - But Saint John Paul II said, "The love and life of the Gospel cannot be thought of first and foremost as a kind of precept" (VS 23). If we pay close attention, we see that Jesus came to take us beyond the commandments.
  - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus started with various of the commandments in the Decalogue, like, "Thou shalt not kill" (Fifth) and "Thou shalt not commit adultery," (Sixth) or "Do not take a false oath" (Second and Eighth), "but I say to you...": do not be angry with your brother, do not lust,

let your yes be yes and your no mean no (Mt 5:21-48). Jesus was trying to bring us from external adhesion to divine imperatives to the interior virtues flowing from love of God and neighbor that order us toward God and others.

- Speaking about virtue, he summed up the Sermon on the Mount saying, “Every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. ... By their fruits you will know them” (Mt 7:15-20). He was focused not so much on the fruit, or the deed, as much as he was on the tree that naturally bore good fruit. That tree is the virtuous person, the one who is attached to him like branches on the vine (Jn 15:1-8), who produces fruit that endures. Individual acts matter, and can matter eternally, but what Jesus had come to do is to form virtuous people. The virtuous person is someone, loved by God, who in turn, more and more, loves as Jesus loves and bears fruit in acts of love like second nature. He or she has the habits that have led to a character that does the good and avoids evil more easily, more routinely, and more fully. The essence of Christianity is not our moral action, but God’s communicating his divine life to us and making it possible for us to live a new life in communion with God and others. The goal of the Christian moral life is, therefore, to be able to say with St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). It’s to allow the virtues of Christ to live in us.
- Hence, when the Beatitudes speak about poverty of spirit, compassion for the suffering, meekness, hunger for holiness, being merciful, purity of heart, peacemaking, and the willingness to suffer for the faith, we see all of those as Christ’s permanent habits (Mt 5:1-12). When Saint Paul says that love, “is patient, ... kind, ... not jealous, ... not pompous, ... not inflated, ... not rude, ... does not seek its own interests, ... is not quick-tempered, ... does not brood over injury, ... does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth, ... bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4-7), he is describing virtues that are all predicable of Jesus. Jesus called himself “The Way” (Jn 14:6), and summoned us to follow him (Jn 21:22) and St. John commented, “Whoever he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 Jn 2:6). To follow Jesus is to follow his path of virtue.
- What virtues are needed today?
  - Let’s get concrete about the virtues that are essential today for our renewal as disciples and through us the renewal of the Church and society.
  - There’s no need to be original and come up with a new moral recipe. The most important virtues we need are those needed in every age. We can begin with what are called the theological and cardinal virtues.
  - The three most important virtues are faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3), what we call the “theological virtues” because they have God as their origin, motive and end and adapt our faculties to live in communion with God.
    - Faith
      - Faith is the habitual and firm disposition infused by God into the souls of the faithful by which we believe in Him and because of that trust, in all he has said and revealed to us.
      - When there are catastrophes happening within the Church, like scandals, people abandoning the Church, people not coming to Mass or Confession, not getting married, not bringing their children to be baptized, not getting anointed, when there’s widespread lack of belief in the real presence, it’s tempting for people to doubt that God is really in charge. It’s similarly tempting when there are catastrophes happening to the Church, like to persecution and massacre of Christians in various lands and infringements against religious freedom closer to home. Like the apostles in the boat with the sleeping Jesus on the Sea of Galilee during the tempest, we need faith that God is with us always, that he seeks to bring good out of evil, and that all things will work out for the good for those who love God.
    - Hope
      - Hope is the virtue infused by God by which we place our trust in Christ’s promises and rely on God’s help to obtain them, especially the promise of the kingdom of

heaven and eternal life. Pope Benedict, in his encyclical *Saved by Hope*, indirectly defined hope as living with God in the world. Today many are tempted toward despair, to believe that tomorrow will be worse than today, that things overall are inexorably heading in the wrong direction. This is seen, for example, in the skyrocketing rates of suicide and depression. But it's also seen in the more subtle form of despair when people focus above all on the negative, when people, including Christians, complain and decry so much that they drag themselves and everyone else down. This does not mean that we have to play the ostrich and bury our heads, but it does mean that we need to live what we pray in the heart of the Mass, "We have lifted [our hearts] up to the Lord." If we believe that the Risen Christ is with us, then, to some degree, every day needs to be approached as if Mary Magdalene, whose feast we celebrate today, has just come through the door saying the stone has been rolled back.

- Charity
  - Charity or *agape* is the stable habit infused by God by which we love Him above all things for his own sake and our neighbor as ourselves out of love for Him. It's helpful to recall that Christian charity is what converted the Roman empire: love for God shown in martyrdom, and love for others shown in Christian community by which people formerly unknown before baptism cared for each other so much that they would freely sell all they had to care for those in need. This two-fold love has been what has spurred the reform of the Church throughout the centuries: a zealous love for God to do reparation for and eradicate sins in the Church as well as lukewarmness; a love for others that decries the self-harm done by alienation from God, that strives to bring others to know Christ, that passionate fights against injustices and takes on flesh in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Our age needs this love as much as any, to make the faith credible, attractive and actual.
- Cardinal virtues
  - We likewise need the four cardinal virtues, so dubbed by St. Ambrose from the Latin *cardo, cardinis*, for "hinge," because on these acquired virtues the moral life depends.
  - The cardinal virtues are found in Plato, Aristotle, and the Book of Wisdom, where it says that that divine Wisdom "teaches moderation and prudence, justice and fortitude, and nothing in life is more useful for men than these" (Wis 8:7).
  - Courage
    - Courage is the virtue that helps us strive with firm perseverance for something arduous, to do what we ought to do despite our fears. In an age consumed by fear and anxiety, we need courage, courage to go on when we encounter painful circumstances that can't be changed immediately, courage defend Christ and the Church when attacked, courage to stand up for those suffering from the neglect or abuse of others, courage like Christ in the fulfillment of our vocation. A great modern witness is Jimmy Lai.
  - Prudence
    - Prudence is the stable habit of practical wisdom by which we discern the true good in each circumstance and choose the right means to achieve it. It is what helps us to find the golden mean between the extremes of too much and too little in our behavior. Prudence, buttressed by the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom and counsel, is so needed today in an age when we and others are tempted toward overreaction, when the apostolate has become more challenging, when cultural attacks against the faith have become occasionally ferocious. A great icon is Saint Thomas More.
  - Justice
    - Justice is the constant and firm habit of will to give God and neighbor their due. In an age in which many try to wiggle their way out of commitments, when people clamor for rights without mentioning their responsibilities, justice makes us

honorable. At a time in which there are so many conspicuous injustices, where corruption has occasionally invaded public institutions and used the power of high office, government agencies, legal infrastructure, or law enforcement for personal gain against the rights of others, we need it. When Pope Francis came to the United Nations in 2015, he dedicated his entire address to world leaders to the theme of justice, which has to go beyond words to effective remedies. We Christians need to lead in giving to God and others what they're due so that we can more effectively draw others to help make a more just society. One particular application of justice is honesty, in which we give others the truth. In an age of political spin and fake news, of tabloid gossip and character assassination, of flattery and avoidance of anything to which someone might take offense, we Christians have got to be characterized, as we have been in previous centuries, by our candor and the justice of our speech. The prophets are always characterized by the way they fight for justice in both deeds and words.

- Temperance

- Temperance is the virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and balances how we use created goods. In an age of addictions — to food and drink, to prescription drugs and illegal narcotics, to sex, to money, to power, to social media, to entertainment, sports and media, to being liked — temperance is urgently needed. Temperance is not suppression, or repression, or a lack of passion, but a capacity to harmonize particular goods without one's overall good so that smaller goods don't become absolute. I've found through serving as a spiritual director to many high achievers that moderation is often harder than total abstention. It's easier not to drink at all than to have just one beer or glass of wine, to have no sweets than a small slice, to binge at prayer for a few hours than steadily to pray 15 or 30 minutes a day. In an addicted age, where targeted advertisements for pleasure flood our devices, we Christians need not just to be temperate but to show the beauty of the freedom that flows from this self-mastery with regard to pleasures. A great witness are the religious who through the joyful profession of the evangelical counsels show us a proper response to material goods, physical pleasures and our own will.

- Capital Virtues

- The last group of virtues I'd like to mention would be what some call the "capital virtues," because they are the stable dispositions that oppose respectively the seven capital sins. Living these, too, is necessary for self-renewal, the renewal of our culture, the Church and society. I have time just to name them, but I hope their value will be readily seen.

- Against the capital sin and vice of pride, we need the virtue of humility.
- Against the vice of greed or avarice, we need the virtue of generosity.
- Against the vice of envy, we need the virtue of fraternal love.
- Against the vice of lust, we need the virtue of chastity.
- Against the vice of gluttony, we need the already discussed virtue of temperance.
- Against the vice of unrestrained anger, we need the strength of meekness.
- Against the vice of sloth, we need the virtue of diligence, or hard work based on love for those we're serving and providing for.

- Growing in virtue

- The last part of my talk is dedicated to how we grow in these theological, cardinal, capital and other virtues.
- Jesus tells us twice in St. Luke's Gospel, "To anyone who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he seems to have will be taken away" (Lk 8:18, 19:26). The virtues must be exercised to grow strong; if they are not exercised, like physical muscles, they can dissipate and disappear.
- The Catechism tells us that the human virtues are acquired by education, by deliberate acts through perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts, and by divine grace (CCC 1810).

- I'd like to focus therefore on three things: education, training, and supernatural means.
  - Education
    - We need to be taught about virtue and then become teachers of others.
    - Especially in an age in which “values” are being indoctrinated in culture and in public schools, we need to be very intentional, in our homes, in the Church, in our reading, viewing and cultural habits, to learning and transmitting virtue.
    - We must remember that virtues are not just about isolated acts or good habits, but about character and the type of person we want to become, and so we have to ask those bigger questions especially about the young and inspire them to choose the road less traveled in order to become that person.
    - It's essential to connect the virtues to Christ and his virtues, which will help us to see clearly how the virtues are interconnected.
    - We need to use the imagination, literature, parables, illustrations, to show virtue in action, like for example, CS Lewis, JR Tolkein, GK Chesterton and others have done in modern times. Those are often far more effective means than philosophical and theological discussions.
    - We need the help of a virtuous community to pass on virtue more easily and contagiously, which was one of Alasdair McIntyre's main points in *After Virtue*.
    - Perhaps above all, we need to teach through example, since St. Paul VI's 1975 observation remains valid, that people today are more persuaded by witnesses than teachers, by mystagogues than pedagogues.
    - In an skeptical age, people need to see that's possible, beautiful and joyful to live virtuously. We need to communicate this through their eyes even more effectively than through their ears.
    - The saints are obviously a great help in finding good examples.
  - Training
    - The second means is through training, which helps people take their learning about the virtues and develop good habits in action.
    - We need more than information; we need formation. We need more than teaching; we need coaching and mentoring. We need what Christian tradition calls a Plan of Life.
    - To help people become honest, we need to help them learn to say the truth; to become charitable, to care for the poor; to become temperate, to moderate their portions; to become grateful, to thank God and others readily and often.
    - Part of this training is through the art and duty of fraternal correction, but it's also through the vocation to encourage others with the encouragement we have received from Christ.
    - Special settings for this, as adults, are spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Confession.
    - To do this effectively, we need to help people freely choose the path of virtue, rather than do so with extrinsic motivation of pleasing others.
  - Supernatural Means
    - The final way the Catechism mentions to grow in virtue is by supernatural means.
    - We need to pray for the grace to grow in virtue, knowing that God will not give us a stone when we ask for bread.
    - We need to unite ourselves ever more to Christ through the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, by which Christ comes to live within us and we are more easily able to live our life in communion with him and his virtue. The Sacrament of Confession is a huge help in the persevering work of becoming virtuous, by helping us attack our vices and firmly resolve to supplant them through good new habits.



- The Holy Spirit wants to help us, through his gifts and fruit, and we should regularly invoke his help as the Gift of the Holy Spirit with which we have been sealed in Confirmation becomes more active.
  - God in calling us to live the virtuous life will provide the means.
- Conclusion
- Drawing to a close, I would like to turn to something Pope Benedict said when he visited the White House in 2008. He was speaking about the importance of authentic freedom, the type of freedom to which virtue leads in the context of a metastasizing erroneous notion that has led not only toward various forms of moral slavery but also to the undermining of a free and virtuous society. What he said there is key for us in terms of the transmission of virtue.
  - “Freedom,” he stated, “is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility. ... The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one’s deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate. In a word, freedom is ever new. It is a challenge held out to each generation, and it must constantly be won over for the cause of good.”
  - That perennial challenge to freedom is also a constant one for virtue as well. A life of virtue is a challenge held out to every generation and it must be constantly chosen, repeatedly won over to the cause of good. Virtue is, like freedom, ever new.
  - That’s the newness Christ, who makes everything new, wants to give, as he helps us to “make every effort to supplement [our] faith with virtue” (2 Pet 1:5). That’s the newness through which he wants us to renew the Church and the world.
  - Thank you very much!