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”?

Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC
Community of Jesus Crucified
103 Railroad Avenue
St. Martinville, LA 70582
(337) 394-6550
www.jesuscrucified.net