

SOLT Lay Formation Teaching Transcript

IMITATE MARY BECOME LIKE JESUS LIVE FOR THE TRIUNE GOD

VIRTUE

Introduction

God bless you and Our Lady, St. Joseph and all the Holy Angels and Saints. Welcome to the Lay Formation Program of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. My name is Fr. Zachary of the Mother of God. It's my joy to share with you Our Lady's life. This Lay Formation Program is a gift from the Most Holy Trinity revealing to us how to respond to the call to live the Trinitarian Life of Communion as Our Lady perfectly responded and responds to this invitation to a relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Today, we will speak about virtue and how Our Lady lived the perfect life of virtue. We will discuss her 10 principle virtues and we will pray that Our Lady will teach you how to live a life of virtue. We begin with prayer.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, pray for us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Knowing God as Father

As we've been progressing in this first year of the Lay Formation Program we thank God Our Father for drawing us into a deeper relationship with Him. One of the principle goals of the first year of formation is to know God as our Father. To always be able to cry out, "Abba, Father, Daddy!" and trusting God in His goodness. Our Lady has been sharing with us her relationship with God the Father. God the Father wants us to live a life of holiness and virtue. Today we discuss virtue. Now there are many ways to approach the subject of virtue. In fact, it's at the heart of the third section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and we refer you to this great gift of the Church. The third section, Life in Christ begins, by quoting St. Leo the Great:

"Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the kingdom of God."

What a perfect instruction for us. It reiterates what we've been formed in thus far, understanding that God has a plan and purpose. We've prayed and continue to pray to respond to that plan, to receive the grace to come to a life of holiness, happiness and, God willing, reach heaven. We have come to understand how we are created in the Image and Likeness of God. We are to know our dignity. That is exactly what this section of the CCC began with, "Christian, recognize your dignity." We proceed to the Call to Holiness, the call to live the communion of God, God's life of communion as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Mary the Model of Virtue

Virtue is the fifth teaching area of formation in this first year of the Lay Formation Program. I could continue through the Catechism, but will leave that to you and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach you all things as it says right in Holy Scripture. That has to be properly understood, right? When we say the Holy Spirit will teach you all things, which means that you hear the Holy Spirit clearly through the Catholic Church. If you hear anything contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church, that is not from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Catholic Church. We must understand everything properly. When I taught theology it seemed as if in every class I would say, "Properly understood." The best way to properly understand virtue is to go right to Our Blessed Mother -- the model of virtue for human persons. As a human person, Our Blessed Mother responds perfectly to the will of God living a life of virtue as the first and perfect disciple of Jesus. We are disciples of Jesus and Mary. Let us turn then, to Our Lady's life, the foundation of this Lay Formation program. Isn't it beautiful? There is a relational reality in this Lay Formation Program. It is not just about book knowledge. Book knowledge is good, but relationships are superior. Relationships are what we are created for. In fact, our relationships will be blessed if we live a life of virtue. Let's go to Our Lady, Our Mother, and ask, "What does Our Mother teach us by the way she lived." St. Louis Marie deMontfort, a beautiful saint, teaches us that Our Lady has 10 principle virtues. Which we are to imitate:

10 Principle Virtues of Our Lady (St. Louis deMontfort)

- **profound humility**
- **lively faith**
- **blind obedience**
- **continual mental prayer**
- **mortification in all things**
- **surpassing purity**
- **ardent charity**
- **heroic patience**
- **angelic sweetness**
- **divine wisdom**

1. Profound Humility

Let's look at these more deeply. First, Our Lady lived of life profound humility. She recognizes that she was created out of nothing in God's goodness. She kept her vision -- her heart -- on the greatness of God. She saw everything she received as gift. She considered herself the last, the least and the lowest. And yet, God bestowed on her, His greatest gift -- Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit came upon Our Blessed Mother when she said "yes" to the plan of God. Jesus seeing her profound humility leapt out of heaven into her womb. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Humility moves God. Do you want to move God? God cannot resist humility. From the proud He keeps a distance. It says that in Sacred Scripture.

You see it over and over and over again, as Our Lord teaches us the path to humility. He, who is the Second Person of the Trinity, doesn't deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, He empties Himself and takes the form of a slave being born in the likeness of men. He was known to be of human estate and it was thus that He humbled Himself, obediently -- accepting death, even death on a cross. That's in 2 Phil 2:6-11, the great Christological hymn. We see the humility of Christ that Our Blessed Mother embraces. Humility moves God. Humility is the foundation of all the virtues according to St. Augustine. Humility is the foundation of a life of virtue and life of God. Let us embrace humility. Let us learn from Our Lady. Let us pray to be humble. Let us ask Our Lady to teach us about her Son, Jesus, who is meek and humble of heart.

2. Lively Faith

The second principle virtue of Our Lady is Lively Faith. In fact, Faith and Humility go together because faith teaches us who God is and when you truly understand who God is you know how great He is -- that He fills the whole universe. He's the Creator of all. Then we will bow down humbly before Our Lord and maker -- Our King and our God. When you have great faith it will help you be humble. Humility is keeping our littleness connected with God's greatness. When they come together, God works wonders in the humble of heart. It takes faith. Faith is a great gift. We talked about faith from the first section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), the 12 articles of faith contained in the Apostles Creed, and the Nicene Creed. Faith is one of three theological virtues so we can relate to God and live a supernatural life. Faith is a great virtue. Our Lady exemplifies Faith by saying "yes" to God's plan. The Trinity is revealed to Our Lady and she is the first human person to whom the Trinity is expressly revealed. This little 15 year old girl -- holy, pure, full of love and grace says "yes" to God's plan even though it's impossible for humans to become the Mother of God on their own. She says "yes!" And we are to say "yes." We walk by faith and not by sight, right? Faith precedes understanding. We don't say, "Prove it to me before I'll believe it." That's arrogant and proud. We are finite. God is infinite. God came all the way from heaven to reveal His infinite love and to reveal who He is. In Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium of the Church we'll talk about that. A life of faith -- pray for that gift. Faith is a gift.

3. Blind Obedience

The third principle virtue of Our Blessed Mother is Blind Obedience. This needs to be explained a little bit. Our Lady didn't just close her eyes and walk into walls -- far from it. That is not Blind Obedience. It means she was blind to herself. Her vision was fixed on God and God alone. Our Lady was blind to self. That would be a beautiful way to live! Doesn't selfishness make us sad? Selfishness keeps us from loving. In fact, selfishness and sin keep us from being who we are created to be. You see we're created to love spontaneously. Our Blessed Mother, free from selfishness and sin, loves spontaneously. Have you ever met someone who loves spontaneously? God willing, you have a witness of that in the parents God has given you. I know for a fact that you have a witness of it in Our Blessed Mother who God gave to you as your spiritual mother. Turn to her. Come to her. Ask her to hold you by the hand and teach you about Blind Obedience. This is not the obedience of a dog. This is the obedience of love from the Latin, *audire*, which means to listen with the intention and desire of acting on what you hear from God. It doesn't mean in one ear out the other. You know how our loving parents say, "Listen to me." God says, "Listen to me and then act upon it." When you act upon it, you build virtue. Virtue is a good habit. It's the repetition of doing the good. When you build up good habits your life is blessed. You know that from your natural experience. When you receive supernatural virtues from God in the Holy Spirit, wow! Your life is blessed indeed. Blind obedience is a wonderful virtue. Today, many people scoff at obedience. They set themselves up as the sole authority in everything, and that is terrifying. You know how that is especially any of you who go to the work place, and you have a boss who acts as if he's the authority or king on every single matter that exists under the sun. It's a real burden to work with someone like that.

We want to love. We want to love spontaneously. That is what Blind Obedience is all about. I know when you hear it for the first time you say, "I don't know if I can be blindly obedient Father. What does that mean? Am I not supposed to think?" No! It means, you're supposed to think even more -- about God, about who you are, about your destiny, about love, about happiness. That's what Blind Obedience means. Do not be deceived by the devil or the world. Learn to love spontaneously. You know selfish people cannot love, by definition, right? Selfish people love themselves all the time. We've all encountered selfish people. They are not able to love the way they're supposed to love. However, people who have Blind Obedience to God like our Blessed Mother and the Saints; they are able to love spontaneously. Follow this call to virtue.

4. Continual Mental Prayer

The fourth principle virtue of Our Blessed Mother is Continual Mental Prayer. Our Lady prays always. Now some people will say if I pray always, I won't be able to go to work and sanctify the temple order which is what the lay faithful are supposed to do. We need to pray always. Remember, when you make a morning offering your whole day becomes a prayer. As you offer the virtues and merits of Jesus, Mary and Joseph -- that is praying always. Our Lady gifts you with her Virtue and then you can gift them to others. You see this is all relational, you are a child of Mary and our Blessed Mother gives you herself and her relationships with the Trinity. She gives you her virtues and her merits to apply to others to be generous. We talked about that in the order of gift. Wow! Think about Our Lady right now. She is in heaven at the eternal heavenly banquet of Christ's loving Sacrifice. She is there celebrating the Liturgy continually and yet at the same time she's interceding for us at all times. She's Queen of Heaven and Earth so she has a lot of work to do. Being Queen of Heaven and Earth is a big responsibility. I know a lot of people say, "Our Lady's got it easy," she's Queen of Heaven and Earth. Do you know how much responsibility that is? With God everything is possible though. When you live the life of Our Lady, you learn how to move. In Christ we live and move and have our being. And so you can be praying all the time and serving all the time. The Benedictine Community has a little motto, *Ora et Labora* -- prayer and work. You see, prayer is the work of the soul and work is the prayer of the body. Think about it. Our whole life is integrated. The problem in today's world is we're disintegrated, and we disintegrate. We see in society right now that there is a lack of virtue. We need an infusion of virtue into this world now. We pray for an infusion of virtue. How is that going to take place? It begins with you, and it begins with me, right? It begins with humility by turning to God. We learn from Our Lady --Profound Humility, Lively Faith, Blind Obedience and Continual Mental Prayer.

5. Mortification

We come to her fifth principle virtue, Mortification in All Things. In this day and age most people don't understand mortification, (just like we talked about in Blind Obedience) and sometimes people recoil at such words. Mortification comes from the Latin word which means to die. We are to die to ourselves to rise in Christ to a higher way of life... to a Divine Way of life and to live a virtuous way of life. This flows from our Communion with God. Mortification in all things means one is not attached to other things, or more simply put; they are not possessed by possessions. Many people are possessed by possessions. They say, "I have to have this and I have to have the latest of that." The advertisers manipulate that reality by putting on a new model and new make of something every year. How many vacuum cleaners does somebody need? In many countries in the world where this Lay Formation Program will be aired, they still use a broom in their house and their house is very clean. I've served in the Philippines where they polish their floors with half a coconut. First they get the milk and meat from the coconut and then they use half the coconut to polish the floor. It is good exercise and the floor gets very clean. There is blessing in everything when you keep your vision on God. Mortification in All Things frees us from selfishness and sin. We are not slaves to the flesh. In this day and age another principle virtue that is

needed is Purity, and we will talk about Purity as one of Our Lady's principle virtues. Too many people have given into sins of the flesh, and then they are slaves. We don't want you to be slaves. Virtue sets you free. Vice, which is the opposite of virtue, imprisons you. Virtue is doing the good; vice is when people fall into the bad. We want good habits, and we want to be disciplined in our lives. The word discipline relates to the word disciple. Disciples are disciplined. People that I know that are disciplined are free. Obedience and Mortification in all things sets you free. Because when you die to yourself, you will rise in Christ. Too many people have fallen into vice -- alcohol, drugs, pornography -- and they become slaves to it. We all know people that are enslaved. We must pray for them to come free in Christ. Our Lady will take them by the hand and help them if only they will respond. Who knows it may be you yourself. You might think that there is no help for you. Maybe you just began this program. You might think it was just chance, but nothing is by chance, it's Providence. God loves you and He wants you to be free. He doesn't want you to be trapped in a bottle. He doesn't want you to be trapped in impurity by the cesspool of the vice of pornography. God will set you free if you turn to him. Come to Our Blessed Mother as a mother, and she will help you. Mortification In all Things is the way. Later on in the Lay Formation Program, we'll talk about the three stages of the spiritual life the purgative, illuminative and unitive way. Purgative means to be purified. It relates to the word Purgatory, the place where one is purified. It is not a second chance if someone dies in mortal sin. If they die in mortal sin, they go to hell. They choose to separate themselves from God. God does not send people to hell. People separate themselves from God and that brings sadness to us all because we are all connected. God wants us to live a life of virtue. In the Church now we emphasize virtue ethics. We recognize many people keep beating themselves up because of their sins. And yes, we need to repent of our sins and have sorrow of our and contrition for our sins. The best way to have the victory in Christ is to turn to the way of Virtue. These are positive realities when we answer the Call to Holiness and the life of Jesus and Mary. Mary shows us that it is possible for a human person. That's one of the great realities of a relationship with Our Blessed Mother. She is a human person, one like us, who did it! Oh, you may say she was immaculately conceived and indeed she was. Remember, that's a special way she was redeemed. We are redeemed in our Baptism. Our Lady is here to help us. Here is a great thought for meditation; Our Lady did not have Our Lady. We have Our Lady. So yes, we may not have been immaculately conceived, but we have been given Our Lady who was immaculately conceived and lived this perfect life. As our Mother, she will hold us by the hand. It is amazing. I could pause for the rest of this teaching on the reality that Mary did not have Mary. Yet, I have Mary and all the saints! You are called to be a saint! We need each other. Let us be free from vice and follow our call to the virtuous way of life. Praise God for His love for us in giving us the Blessed Virgin Mary and her model of these virtues. Mortification in all Things is a blessing. At the higher levels we will learn mortification in my own ideas and will. It's a challenge. We'll get there some day. All we want is God's will. God alone.

6. Surpassing Purity

The sixth principle virtue of Our Blessed Mother is Surpassing Purity. Most people only address purity at the flesh level because many people are failing to live purity at the flesh level. Let me share with you the highest level of purity is to love God with all your heart, soul, might and mind. Your life will be blessed. That is the surpassing purity of the Blessed Mother -- she kept her vision fixed on God. When you love God with all your heart, soul, might and mind everything else takes care of itself. Too many people are caught in the battle of the flesh and they are losing ground. At times, they might be gaining some ground and at other times they are staying neutral. The flesh is not what we are created for. Everything we have belongs to God so keep your vision fixed on Him. In the area of the flesh, it is appropriate that I deny myself.

I am a priest. I have a promise of celibacy, thank God. The celibate life allows me to love even more generously. It where you can direct that creative power we call procreation, and where you can direct that love to other people on a spiritual level. To love people's souls is very satisfying -- much more satisfying than physical pleasure which is reserved to a man and woman who are married. It's a great gift. Sexuality is a gift and it's reserved for a sacred space. That is how God arranged it. It's sacred. You are temple of God. You are sacred to God so conduct yourself in a holy and virtuous way.

I assure you the best way to purity is to stay close to Our Lady and look to her life. Look at the fullness of her life, a perpetual virgin. Mary is a perpetual virgin. That is one of the four doctrines of the faith on Our Blessed Mother.

1. *Immaculately Conceived.*

2. *Perpetually a virgin.* These are two of the four doctrines of Our Lady we'll focus on right now: The Immaculate Conception and a perpetual virgin. Both relate to surpassing purity.

3. *She is the Mother of God.* Christ is God; she is the Mother of Christ, therefore, she is the Mother of God. This is truth declared by the Church. In this truth we rejoice -- that a human person was in such intimate communion with God that she was able to conceive Christ in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. We recognize that she conceived Christ in her heart first by loving the Word before she conceived in her womb.

4. *She was assumed body and soul into heaven.* God fulfills His promises. These doctrines relate to her purity in many ways. You see if you live a life of purity -- loving God with all your heart, soul, might and mind -- God is going to do wondrous things in your life. Remember her first principle virtue, Profound Humility. It's all built on Humility. St. Augustine the great Doctor of the Church says it's all built on humility because humility is truth. Humility is truth. The truth is we are created out of dust out of nothing. The truth is God is great and the Creator of all. So we keep our littleness with God's greatness, that's humility. When it's connected, when we are connected to God, God does amazing things just like he did in the life of Our Blessed Mother. Our Mother will teach you the amazing things God wants to do in your life. With God's grace you can live the virtuous life no matter what you've done or even what you're doing right now. Come to Jesus through Mary. Come to Jesus through Mary. Come to Jesus through Mary. She will teach you who you are by pointing to Jesus. Pray for Surpassing Purity.

7. Ardent Charity

The seventh principle virtue of Our Blessed Mother is her Ardent Charity. She is ardent with great zeal and fervor. Remember St. Paul says in Scripture over all of the virtues put on love. *In the end there are three things -- faith, hope and charity, and the greatest of these is charity.* God Himself is Charity. God is uncreated Charity. We have a teaching on that in Our Lady's Society. Ask Our Lady to help you understand that God is uncreated charity while Our Lady is created charity. We are creatures, but when you relate to the God who is uncreated Charity and when you have a proper relationship with God, who is love, Charity is manifest in your life. That is the only way you can have a life of charity. Charity is a theological virtue, a supernatural virtue. These three theological virtues in which we relate to God in a very special way. In a supernatural way, Our Lady will teach you about Ardent Charity. We talked about the definition of charity, to esteem the Goodness of the Father in everyone and everything. Remember we are relating to Our Father in a special way this year. We esteem the goodness of the Father in everyone and everything. Everyone who is sent into our lives, everything that happens in our lives comes to us in the goodness of Our Father. We see it in that perspective. Yes, certainly there is evil in the world. God permits it for now. He always draws good out of everything for those who love Him.

We grow in virtue as we exercise ourselves in virtue. You see to become strong physically you have to exercise. You have to exercise to become strong spiritually too. I served at the University of Kansas as

Chaplain to 27,000 young people. Young people are wonderful, they are idealistic, they have a lot of energy and dreams. Once they get themselves ordered to God (which is what virtue is all about) and once they start listening to God, praying and living the fullness of the faith; it's amazing what happens in their lives. I ask the young people "Have you ever worked out for 8 hours?" Many will say, "yes, Father I've done manual labor," or even in today's society they've been in the gym for eight hours. You know riding the bike, treadmill, weights or aerobics. I say it's pretty challenging, right? They say, "Yes, Father." I say have you ever studied for eight hours? They say, "Yes, Father." Unfortunately, many people cram. It would be better to be disciplined and study over time. I say, "That's more difficult, right? Studying for eight hours?" "Yes, that's more difficult than physical exercise." I say, "Have you ever prayed for eight hours?" "Oh Father," they respond. "What are you talking about?" I repeat, "Have you ever prayed for eight hours? Have you done spiritual exercise?" See if your life isn't well ordered in Virtue you become flabby, out of shape and your health is in jeopardy. You need to be fit -- physically, mentally, spiritually. You are to love God with all your heart, soul, might and mind. To love God with all your heart, soul, might and mind -- will flow from the Virtue of Ardent Charity. Charity is to see the goodness of the Father in everyone and everything and from that charity will flow love. Love is the desire to please the Beloved who is God the Father. If you spend your life pleasing God the Father in everything you do, you will be living the life of Jesus and Mother Mary. Our Lady will help you. That's virtue. That's joy. That's happiness. That's peace. That's strength. In fact, the word virtue comes from the Latin word "vir" which means man. It means strength or courage. Men were thought to be full of strength and courage. We pray that men are men and are true men of God -- not selfish but self giving. The measure of a man is where he lays down His life. The virtuous man can lay down his life for others. It takes strength to lay down your life. Jesus lays down His life for all who accept Him. We are called to lay down our lives. We are called to have a sacrificial love. We are called to have an inspired understanding and we are to have heroic leadership. I find in the world that some people have one of these three blessings happening in their life. It would be wonderful to have someone who had sacrificial love, inspired understanding and heroic leadership! That would be a great blessing to all of us. You are called to this. I am called to this. Our Lady will teach us the way. Virtue is necessary.

8. Heroic Patience

The next principle virtue of Our Lady is Heroic Patience. In fact, one definition of holiness under Canon Law is to live heroic virtue according to your state in life, at all times and in all places. There are four aspects: heroic virtue; according to your state in life; in all times; all places and continually. You're created to be a Saint. That's a good definition of how you're supposed to live -- Heroic Virtue. So it isn't virtue some of the time; it means all of the time according to your state in life -- in every situation in your life, heroically. When we're tested in patience we thank God because we can grow in patience. The fruit of the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery the Carrying of the Cross is patience. People get tired of carrying their cross because they are trying to carry it alone. They need to carry it in Jesus. Jesus carried His cross keeping His will on the will of the Father guided by the Holy Spirit while Our Lady was right there. Our Lady is there for you. Heroic Patience. So, the next time you're frustrated standing in the grocery line or caught up in traffic, recognize that it is a gift. Turn to Our Lady and say a Hail Mary. Our Lady will pray for you now and at the hour of your death. I want that. Then, pray for those other people. God brings us together in life because we need each other and we need to grow in Virtue. We don't say, "Well, that one is making me grow in virtue." We pray for everyone to grow in virtue. We must turn to Our Lady. Heroic Patience. Do you want to be a hero? So many misuse this word hero now. This one's a hero and that one's a hero. There are some true heroes out there -- firemen, policemen, our soldiers -- those who live virtuously. All of them must live virtuously. They do not do anything in a way that is demeaning or anything less than the dignity that we have in God. That is Heroic Patience.

9. Angelic Sweetness

The ninth principle virtue is Angelic Sweetness. Now, we are not angels. Thank God, because He loves mankind so much that He came and assumed our human Nature. We can learn from the angels how to be sweet. I love it when people say, "sweet Jesus, my sweet Savior." We are not talking about candy coating everything -- dripping with sugar -- but a true sweetness that it is a pleasing presence. When men fall in love with a beautiful woman, they call her sweetheart. Isn't it beautiful to have a sweetheart - someone who brings sweetness to our life? That's what Our Lady does. She lives a life of angelic sweetness. She will teach us.

10. Divine Wisdom

The last Principle Virtue and I say Principle Virtue, because Our Lady is perfected in all the virtues because she is the spouse of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit perfects the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. That's how it works. The gifts of the Holy Spirit perfects the virtues and then you come to a life of perfection in God -- not of ourselves -- but by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady is filled with Divine Wisdom. And that is what this world needs, not a wisdom from human persons. We need a wisdom that comes from above. We have so many challenging situations on our hands and that's part of the reason why we're conducting this Lay Formation Program. We need you to give the gift of yourself to be part of the solution in the world today. The solution the world needs today is Divine Wisdom -- not human wisdom. Human wisdom always falls short. It is a gift to apply our knowledge, to be educated, to act in a way that is intelligent, reasonable and rational. We need Divine solutions and Our Lady will help us by always looking for Divine Wisdom, keeping the eternal perspective on everything. Knowing why we're here, where we're from and where we're going.

Turn to the Holy Spirit and ask for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and His fruitfulness in your life -- a life of perfection. Our Lady will obtain the gifts of the Holy Spirit for you if you ask her.

These are the 10 Principle Virtues of Our Blessed Mother. As I said, we could have approached virtue in many ways. You can also turn to the CCC Article VII of Part 3 where there's a good definition of virtue. It reads:

A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to be able to perform good acts but give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends to the good with all of his sensory and spiritual powers. He pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions.

What a beautiful way of life. In the book of Micah we hear: *You have been told O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.* Our Lady fulfills this call of Sacred Scripture. Virtue is relevant to our lives. The virtuous person is a happy person and brings happiness everywhere he or she goes and strives for virtue no matter what your situation is now.

The three most important points of this teaching:

- 1. Virtue is necessary to live the life of God -- of Christ, in whom we are baptized.**
- 2. Virtue is pleasing to God. Because it sets us free to love spontaneously. It sets us free to do the will of God and to arrive at our destiny.**
- 3. Stay close to Our Lady. Imitate her virtues so you can become a saint.**

Our Lady is the easy, short, perfect and sure way to God and to living the life of Jesus Christ, the Virtuous One. Our Lady will teach you. Relate to her -- ask for these graces.

The challenge this month:

Take one of these principle virtues and start to work on it because all of the virtues are connected. If you grow in one virtue, all the other virtues will follow. Pick a virtue and start to grow. Be open to this call. Start to exercise yourself. A little workout is good. Our Lady will help you construct your workout program in a beautiful motherly way.

The grace of this life is FREEDOM. You read right in the CCC it's about FREEDOM. I would like to share with you a little statement by St. Augustine about virtue:

"Virtue is appropriate ordinate (ordered) love." Not simply loving what one ought to love but loving most what deserves the most love and all else with a love suited to its worth."

We pray with St. Augustine, order love within me. Virtue is basically an ordered love. Our Lady will teach you how to live in an ordered love. God first. Love God with all your heart, soul, might and mind and love your neighbor as yourself for the love of God. This is what virtue is all about.

Final Blessing

As always, we end to give you the strength to live this life of virtue under our Lady's mantle. The Lord be with you. May Almighty God Bless You, the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.