

# LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

## Life in Christ - Part 1: By Virtue of Love...

When you and I were baptized, we were given the call to live a holy life, a life that shares in the life of Christ, a life that imitates Christ. When we think about how we might do that, we might begin with Jesus' commandments of love. "One of the scribes asked him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'" [MK 12:28-31] However, we might need some more specifics. How do we actually live out these commandments of love and what help is there for us to live them out?

In answer to these questions, the Church has told us that we are called to live a life of virtue. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], we are told: "Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. [...] They dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love." [CCC 1804] Further, the Church has

named seven specific virtues, which are the basis for all virtuous activity: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. The first three - faith hope and love - are called the Theological Virtues. [CCC 1813] The Cardinal Virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. [CCC 1805]

However, as human beings we constantly have a struggle going on inside us - a fight between good and evil and a fight between virtue and vice. Unfortunately, because of Original Sin, we have the propensity to fall into vice. When we do, we are acting against one of the virtues and are caught by one of the Capital Sins. "Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the capital sins which Christians experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called 'capital' because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth." [CCC 1866]

As we are quickly approaching Lent, we will begin our discussion of virtues and vices by exploring the Capital Sins. This way, we can use the season of Lent to reflect on how the Capital Sins may affect us, so that we can begin the conversion to which Lent calls us. During the Easter season, we will come back to further explore the virtues.

