A ***virtue*** is a habit that perfects the powers of the soul and disposes you to do good. According to Catholic beliefs, the divine grace is offered to the soul, because without God’s help, humans can’t do good on their own. ***Grace***, which is God’s intervention, bolsters a person’s soul, providing the necessary oomph to do the right thing.

**Cardinal, or Moral, Virtues**

The following four virtues are the hinges on which the rest of the moral life swings:

**Prudence** is basically practical common sense. It’s saying or doing the proper thing, at the proper time, and in the appropriate manner. It’s also the ability to know and judge whether to say something or do nothing at all.

**Justice** is the virtue that seeks to promote fair play. It’s the desire and resolve to give each person his due. It demands that you reward goodness and punish evil. Justice can be one of three different types:

**Commutative justice** is based on the principle of quid pro quo, which is Latin for this for that. Commutative justice requires, for example, that a customer pay a fair price for worthwhile goods.

**Distributive justice** involves the relationship between one and many — between an individual and a group — a person and the government, for example.

**Social justice** concerns the relationships between individuals and groups between one another and everyone. The common good and equal treatment are the cornerstones of social justice.

**Temperance** is the virtue by which a person uses balance. It’s the good habit that allows a person to relax and have fun without crossing the line and committing sin.

**Fortitude** is the ability to persevere in times of trial and tribulation — the ability to hang in there when the going gets tough. It’s courage to do the right thing no matter what the cost.

You have to work to develop and maintain these moral virtues. When you’re baptized, you’re granted a different set of values — the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love (charity) — that come to you by virtue of the sacrament itself.