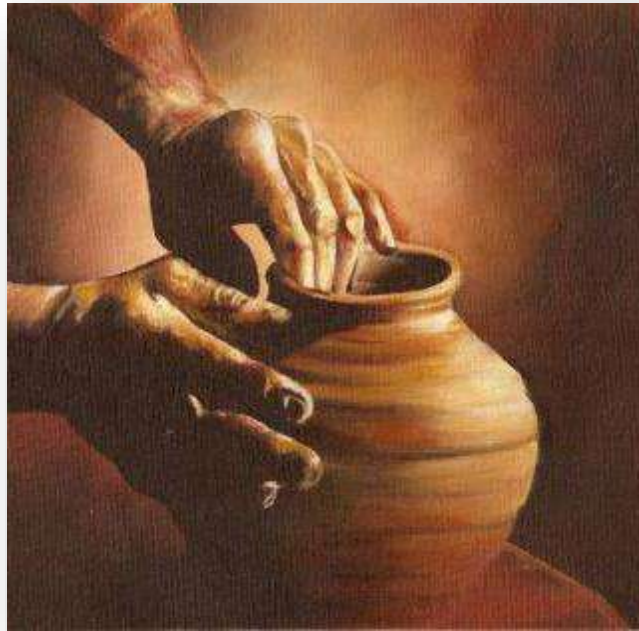


## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues



*The Potter.* Acrylic on canvas, Raquel Guzmán.

4

**” Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”**

Ph 4:8

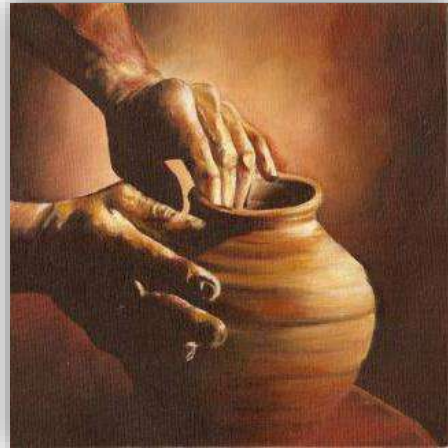
# 4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

## 4

### Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

" Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Ph 4:8



*The Potter.* Raquel Guzmán.



*I've already brought my freedom into play and experienced on many occasions that I don't always have clear ideas, that I let myself be led by others, that I am unable to say NO, that sometimes my heart harbors feelings that lead me to a life of disorder...*

Here's a question...

Is there some way that you can prepare or protect yourself for when you're faced with these types of situations?



*Batman Begins* (USA, 2005), based on the superhero Batman, co-written and directed by Christopher Nolan.

Maybe you've already seen **BATMAN BEGINS**. Otherwise, watch the trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYYRjVof6TU>) or the whole movie!

Bruce Wayne spends a long time physically and mentally preparing himself to fight against **EVIL**.

This movie talks about the fight between good and evil, and the unceasing search for **JUSTICE** and **TRUTH**.

Two quotes stand out:

🦇 "If we fall down it's to learn how to get back up."

🦇 "Who are you? It's what you do that defines you."

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### Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

Let's imagine that our life is a battle: we fall down, we get back up and we start over...

There are outside forces that want to take us where, deep down, we don't want to go, or at least to where it is not in our best interest to be. The end result of these choices and behaviors is that we feel neither happy nor fulfilled.

Don't get scared about the need to fight! We see it constantly in movies!

We need to be well-armed in order not to give in. Which weapons can we count on?

**THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO FIND OUT!!**



**1 Draw an arrow connecting the person's name to their photograph:**

**Mother Teresa of Calcutta - Mahatma Ghandi - Oskar Schlinder**



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Work in groups to research information about the lives and actions of these three figures.

Decide on four personal characteristics possessed by each of these people that made their lives a model for people to follow.

There is no doubt that these people have many virtues, which made them famous throughout the whole world.

Think of some people in your own life who have been virtuous.

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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

2 We are surrounded by virtuous people who probably pass before our eyes unnoticed. They are not the typical role models that society presents to us in movies or music, or on TV.



Were you able to think of people close to you like maybe your grandpa, your teacher or the nurse that cared for you when you were in the hospital?

Do you think that virtues are a really lofty thing? Something for saints? For heroes and superheroes?



We are used to seeing movies about superheroes at the theater or on TV: Superman, Batman, The Incredible Hulk, Captain America or The Fantastic 4. They are extraordinary beings endowed with exceptional qualities, capable of giving their lives for justice and the common good.. Sounds pretty good, right?

Through these fictional characters we can understand how it is necessary to interiorly arm ourselves if we want to do great things in life.

**Now it's your turn to be the superhero!!**

Do you dare to be the protagonist?

Arm yourselves with the values and virtues that our dear friends from Marvel have amazed us with in their comics. Don't forget that the virtues aren't just for exceptional people, but...

**FOR YOU.**



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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues



The virtues are dispositions and good habits that dispose me to do what is good.

They allow me not only to perform good acts, but also to give the best of myself. With all of my sensitive efforts I seek out the good, and I choose it through concrete actions (St. Gregory of Nyssa).

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.

The virtues can be defined as strategies for love.



3 Look at the picture. Pretty impressive, right?

Arthur Nabarrete Zanetti was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil on April 16, 1990.

He is a gymnast who won the gold medal in gymnastic rings at the 2012 Olympic Games in London.



How do you think he was able to balance?

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How was he able to become #1 in this event?

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What did he have to do?

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# 4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

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### Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

4 Relating the topic of virtues to a sports championship, reflect on the following questions:



Do you think people are born virtuous? Or do they become virtuous?

Do you think that virtues are "inherited" or can they be learned and developed?

Are we all capable of being virtuous? Or is it just something for certain "chosen" people?

Now we know that the virtues are necessary weapons, and that each one of us is responsible for seeking them out and practicing them in order to make them our own. Let's give a concrete example of what we're talking about.

Just like *Marvel* created the *FANTASTIC 4*, we, too, count on 4 fantastic Virtues, on which the rest of the human virtues are built. **The Cardinal Virtues** are:



Prudence

Justice

Temperance

Fortitude



5 Next, we'll see the definitions and characteristics of the four virtues. Try to describe what they are with your classmates:





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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues



With your classmates, try to come up with a definition of each virtue using your own words.

VIRTUES	?	CHARACTERISTICS
1 	JUSTICE	Firm and constant will to give what is due. Habitual uprightness of thought and conduct with our neighbor. Puts order and integrity into our relationships with God and neighbor.
2 	PRUDENCE	Discern the good and choose good means to attain it. Guides other virtues, setting rule and measure. It is the cause, root, mother measure, example, guide and reason of the moral virtues.
3 	FORTITUDE	Ensures firmness and constancy in difficulties. Enables us to conquer fear of suffering and death. Makes possible faithfulness to the good when it is especially costly or dangerous.
4 	TEMPERANCE	Moderates the attraction of sensitive pleasures that separate us from the good. Teaches us to moderate our impulses. Fosters self-mastery and internal balance.

**6** In the same groups, fill out the following chart:

For each virtue, try to imagine a real-life situation that could happen to you and add which behaviors or practices you could work on in order to become virtuous.

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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues



VIRTUES	SCENARIOS	TASKS
PRUDENCE	Faced with the possibility of going out with friends who drink and smoke, you finally decide to go watch a movie at another friend's house...	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect on what is most opportune in every moment.</li> <li>2. ....</li> <li>3. ....</li> </ol>
JUSTICE	On a school day, two students, Josh and Matthew, arrive late to their first period and both get into trouble. Josh overslept because he was playing PlayStation until late at night. Matthew, upon crossing the street to get to the school, saw an elderly woman fall and helped her get up, picked up her cane, and called an ambulance because she had a cut on her head.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Help those who are in need, in spite of possible detriments it might cause me.</li> <li>2. Avoid doing what is unnecessary, even if it doesn't have immediate bad consequences.</li> <li>3. ....</li> </ol>
TEMPERANCE	I get home starving, sit at the table and start to eat before the rest of my family sits down.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Know how to wait to eat until everyone is seated.</li> <li>2. Know how to say "no" or "wait" to a craving.</li> <li>3. ....</li> </ol>
FORTITUDE	I haven't studied enough for my test and my classmate who knows the test questions encourages me to switch tests with him.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Overcome the temptation to cheat on a test.</li> <li>2. ....</li> <li>3. ....</li> </ol>

You can not only live out these four virtues - your life can be filled with virtue! Most of the time they are set against negative behaviors, like sin. This is the fight between good and evil.

Who do you want to listen to?





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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

**7** To finish up, listen to this story and, after a little bit of discussion, share your questions and worries with your classmates. This will help you to obtain one more thing to carry in your backpack along the path of life.

It is said that the first Arab to cross the desert encountered a venerable-looking old man in a cave, who asked him:

- Young man, where are you going?
- I want to cross the desert.

The old man stopped to think for a moment and said:

— What you desire is very difficult. In order to cross the desert you will need three things. Take these stones. This topaz is **faith**, yellow as the sands of the desert; this emerald is **hope**, green as the leaves of a palm tree; and this ruby is **charity**, red as the setting sun. Keep going south and you will find the Oasis of Nascara, where you will live a happy life. But be careful not to lose any of the stones, otherwise you won't reach your destination.

The young man set out on his camel and traversed thousands of miles through the golden dunes. One day he was seized by a doubt:

— Maybe the old man tricked me! What if the oasis that I was promised doesn't exist and this desert never ends?

He was ready to turn back when he noticed that something had fallen onto the sand. It was the **topaz**. The young man got down from his camel to pick it up and thought to himself:

— No, no. I have to trust in the old man's promise. I will continue my journey.

Many days passed. The sun, the wind, and the cold of night were wearing him down. His strength began to fade and there was not even a palm tree or spring in sight on the endless horizon. He was about to let himself fall from the camel, when he noticed that something had fallen onto the ground. It was the **emerald**. The young man got down to pick it up and said to himself:

— I have to be strong; maybe the oasis is just a little way off. If I don't continue, I'll surely die. As long as I still have a breath of life, I will keep going.

The young man continued on his way. One day, he found a little pool of water next to a palm tree. He was ready to throw himself at the pond, when he saw the eyes of his camel, as pleading and tender as those of a man, asking for water. So he thought that he should take pity on the weary animal, since he himself could still go a little longer, and let the camel drink those few drops.

Imagine his surprise when the camel fell down dead at his feet. The water was rotten. On the ground, the young man noticed the sparkling **ruby** and bent down to pick it up, thanking the heavens for repaying his generosity with the camel.

Lifting up his eyes, he saw some palm trees in the distance. It was the Oasis of Nascara. When he arrived, he found the old man from the cave next to a pure wellspring, smiling joyfully.

— You have reached your destination because you have conserved the three precious stones: **faith**, **hope** and **charity**. Woe to you if you would have lost any one of them! You would have surely died!

After giving him some fresh water and dates, the old man said goodbye to the young man, saying:

— For the rest of your life, always keep the topaz, the emerald and the ruby **close to your heart**. That way you will arrive all the way to paradise. Never lose them.

# 4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

*Man is like someone who survives a shipwreck. At birth he begins a great voyage: the journey of his life. Other people have completed it before him, but they don't go with him. Even though they were at his origin and await him at his destination, he has to make the journey alone. He can't go far from his companion: solitude. Along this journey, he is burdened by his lack of trust, he is tempted to abandonment and has the tendency to think only of himself. Three human virtues come to his aid: faith in what does, in himself and in God; the hopeful vision of the future in which his destination lies; and the generous donation of himself as a vital attitude.*

**I want to cross the desert.**

How does my life resemble that of the young man who wants to cross the desert?

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**The young man set out and traversed thousands of miles....**

- How is my path going?
  - Does the experience of others help me?
- 

**I have to trust in the old man's promise.**

- Who do *I* trust in? Why?
- 

**As long as I still have a breath of life, I will keep going.**

- In what situations have I told myself, or would I like to tell myself, the same thing?
- 

**You have reached your destination because you have conserved the three precious stones: faith, hope and charity.**

- How do I conserve these three stones/virtues?
-

# 4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

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## Tightening the Ropes: The Virtues

I acquire the moral virtues with human efforts.

Virtue is a value that I make my own through concrete efforts. Only through the practice and exercise of virtue can I assimilate virtues and make them my own.



- ✦ *Prudence* has for its object order in its totality; it seeks the good, correct and opportune in general.
- ✦ *Justice* has for its object the order toward others, giving to each person what pertains to him/her.
- ✦ *Fortitude* has for its object seeking the good in spite of oneself (tiredness, fear, embarrassment).
- ✦ *Temperance* has for its object obtaining order within oneself, within my own "I".

I must look at sin as certain concrete behaviors or actions that distance me from people (so many times from those whom I love most), from God and from myself. In addition to having negative consequences for others, sin sinks me into a mediocre existence, filling my life, in the end, with a profound sadness and lack of meaning.

The theological virtues have to do directly with God. They are faith, hope and charity. The moral virtues form my features, they configure my manner of being and living; and the theological virtues form my personal attitude on the path toward God.

The good news is that the virtues are also a GIFT, a present: FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY help us encounter the GIFT (with a capital "G"), the most VIRTUOUS one, the HOLY of holies, the most powerful superhero: JESUS CHRIST.



As a GIFT:  
Look up the beginning of Chapter  
13 of the First Letter of St.  
Paul to the Corinthians and soak  
up the Hymn of Charity!!!

# 4 THE IMPROPER USE OF FREEDOM: SIN

BUILDING UP LOVE





