THE DAILY BREAD

The Magnificat of the Beloved



The Virtues

Becoming Who You Were Made to Be

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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The Everyday Apostle

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INTRODUCTION

The Woman You Are Becoming

Every woman is becoming someone. With each choice she makes, each response to difficulty, each decision to love or to withhold love, she is slowly shaping the person she will be, growing either toward the woman God made her to be or away from her. The faith has a word for the qualities that make a woman good, that shape her into her truest self, and that word is virtue. Yet many women think of virtue, if they think of it at all, as a vague niceness or a set of rules, rather than what it actually is, the stable strengths of character that make a woman able to know the good, choose it, and do it, the very architecture of the person she is becoming. To understand the virtues is to understand what a woman is made to become and what the Church gives her to work with.

This book is about the virtues, the qualities that make a woman who she was made to be. It will show what virtue actually is, a stable strength of character and not a feeling; the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which direct a woman to God; the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, on which all other virtues hinge; how virtue is built as a habit through repeated choice, always available and always costly; the role of grace in virtue; and what a virtuous woman actually looks like in the home, the workplace, the parish, and the culture. The aim is not merely to admire the virtues but to understand them as the architecture of the woman a woman is becoming, so that she can set about becoming who she was made to be.

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, think about these things. — Philippians 4:8

The Scripture directs a woman to fill her mind with whatever is true, honorable, just, and lovely, the very qualities the virtues cultivate, so that the pursuit of virtue is the pursuit of all that is good. This book will map the virtues: what virtue is; the theological virtues; prudence and justice; fortitude and temperance; virtue as habit; the role of grace; and the virtuous woman. A woman is always becoming someone. This book will show her the virtues that shape her into who she was made to be, so that she can grow, by grace and choice, into the fullness of the woman God created her to become.

CHAPTER ONE

What Virtue Is

Strength of Character, Not a Feeling

Before considering the particular virtues, a woman must understand what virtue actually is, a stable strength of character that enables her to know and do the good, not a passing feeling or a mere external conformity to rules. Understanding what virtue is, a firm and good disposition built into character, corrects common misunderstandings and reveals the real goal of the moral life.

Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge. — 2 Peter 1:5

A Stable Good Disposition

Virtue is a stable, habitual disposition to the good, a firm quality of character that inclines a woman reliably toward knowing and doing what is right, so that it is a settled strength and not a passing act. A virtue is not a single good act but a stable, habitual disposition, a firm quality worked into a woman's character that inclines her reliably toward the good, so that the virtuous woman does not merely do a good thing on occasion but is the kind of person who readily knows, chooses, and does the good, the disposition settled into who she is. This means virtue is a quality of character, a stable strength that makes a woman good and makes her actions good, so that it is something she becomes rather than merely something she occasionally does, a settled disposition rather than an isolated act. The woman who understands virtue as a stable good disposition seeks to become virtuous in character, not merely to perform occasional good acts. A stable good disposition is what virtue is, a firm habitual quality of character that inclines a woman reliably toward the good, so that it is a settled strength rather than a passing act.

Not a Mere Feeling

Virtue is not a feeling, not a matter of feeling kind or brave or pure, but a settled disposition that holds firm whether or not the feeling is present, so that it is reliable where feeling is not. It is a mistake to confuse virtue with feeling, to think that being virtuous means feeling loving, feeling courageous, feeling pure, for feelings come and go and cannot be commanded, while virtue is a stable disposition of character that holds firm regardless of feeling, so that the courageous woman acts bravely even when she feels fear, and the temperate woman restrains herself even when she feels desire, the virtue reliable where the feeling is not. This means a woman need not wait to feel virtuous to act virtuously, for virtue is not a feeling but a disposition that enables right action whatever the feelings, so that she can be virtuous even against contrary feelings, acting from character rather than emotion. The woman who understands virtue is not a mere feeling acts from settled character rather than waiting for the right emotion. Not a mere feeling,

virtue is a settled disposition that holds firm whether or not the feeling is present, so that it is reliable where feeling is not and a woman can act virtuously even against contrary feelings.

The Architecture of a Good Life

The virtues together form the architecture of a good life, the strengths of character that make a woman able to live well, so that growing in virtue is building the very structure of the person she is becoming. The virtues are not isolated qualities but together form the architecture of a good life and a good person, the interlocking strengths of character that enable a woman to know the good, choose it, and do it reliably across the whole of her life, so that to grow in the virtues is to build the very structure of the good person she is becoming, assembling the strengths on which a good life stands. This means a woman's pursuit of virtue is the building of her character, the assembling of the strengths that make a good life possible, so that the virtues are not optional ornaments but the architecture of the woman she is meant to become, the structure of a life lived well. The woman who understands virtue as the architecture of a good life builds her character through the virtues, assembling the structure of the good person she is becoming. The architecture of a good life is formed by the virtues together, the strengths of character that make a woman able to live well, so that growing in virtue builds the very structure of the person she is becoming.

CHAPTER TWO

Faith, Hope, and Love

The Theological Virtues

The highest virtues are the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, which are given by grace and direct a woman straight to God, so that they are the foundation and form of the whole Christian life. Understanding the three theological virtues, which unite a woman to God, reveals the supernatural virtues on which all the rest depend and the greatest of which is love.

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. — 1 Corinthians 13:13

Given by Grace, Directed to God

The theological virtues are not acquired by human effort but infused by grace, and they are directed to God Himself, so that by them a woman believes in God, hopes in Him, and loves Him. The three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, differ from the other virtues in that they are not built up by human effort but infused directly by God's grace, and they have God Himself as their object, for by faith a woman believes God and all He has revealed, by hope she trusts in God for eternal life and the grace to reach it, and by charity she loves God above all things and her neighbor for His sake, so that these virtues are given by grace and directed to God. This means the theological virtues are supernatural gifts, poured into a woman by grace and orienting her directly to God, so that they are the virtues by which she is united to God, believing, hoping, and loving as His grace enables. The woman who understands the theological virtues as given by grace and directed to God receives them as the supernatural gifts that unite her to Him. Given by grace, directed to God, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are infused by God and have Him as their object, so that by them a woman believes in God, hopes in Him, and loves Him.

The Foundation of the Christian Life

The theological virtues are the foundation of the whole Christian life, for they unite a woman to God and animate and direct all the other virtues, so that without them no virtue reaches its supernatural end. The theological virtues are foundational, for they unite a woman to God, who is the source and goal of all goodness, and they animate and give direction to all the other virtues, so that a naturally good act becomes meritorious and supernatural when informed by faith, hope, and love, and without these theological virtues even the natural virtues cannot reach their supernatural end in God. This means the theological virtues are the foundation on which the whole Christian life and all the other virtues rest, for they orient a woman to God and elevate her other virtues toward Him, so that they are not one set of virtues among others but the foundation of them all. The woman who understands the theological virtues as the foundation builds her whole Christian life and her other virtues on faith, hope, and love. The foundation of the Christian life is the theological virtues, which unite a woman to God and animate all the other virtues, so that without them no virtue reaches its supernatural end.

The Greatest Is Love

Among the theological virtues the greatest is charity, the love of God and neighbor, which is the form and soul of all the virtues and which alone endures into eternity. The Scripture declares that faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest of these is love, for charity is the highest of the virtues, the love of God above all and of neighbor for His sake, which gives form and life to all the other virtues, so that a virtue without charity is

incomplete, and charity alone endures into eternity, when faith gives way to sight and hope to possession but love remains forever. This means charity is the summit and soul of the whole life of virtue, the greatest of all the virtues, so that a woman's growth in virtue aims finally at charity, the love that forms all the rest and endures forever, the greatest thing she can possess. The woman who understands that the greatest is love aims her whole life of virtue at charity, the love that forms all the rest and endures forever. The greatest is love, for charity, the love of God and neighbor, is the highest of the theological virtues, the form and soul of all the virtues, which alone endures into eternity.

CHAPTER THREE

Prudence and Justice

Seeing Rightly, Giving Each Her Due

Among the four cardinal virtues on which the moral life hinges are prudence, which enables a woman to see rightly what to do, and justice, which disposes her to give each person her due, two virtues foundational to a good life. Understanding prudence and justice, the first two cardinal virtues, reveals the strengths by which a woman judges well and acts rightly toward others.

The prudent gives thought to his steps. — Proverbs 14:15

Prudence, the Guide of the Virtues

Prudence is right reason applied to action, the virtue by which a woman discerns the true good in each situation and the right means to achieve it, so that it guides and directs all the other virtues. Prudence is the virtue of practical wisdom, right reason applied to action, by which a woman sees clearly what is truly good in a given situation and chooses the right means to accomplish it, giving thought to her steps rather than acting rashly or blindly, so that prudence is the guide of all the moral virtues, directing their exercise, for courage, justice, and temperance all need prudence to know how, when, and how much to act. This means prudence is foundational and directive, the virtue that lets a woman judge rightly what to do and how, so that it guides all her other virtues, without which even good intentions go astray for want of wisdom in acting. The woman who grows in prudence sees rightly what to do and guides all her other virtues by practical wisdom. Prudence, the guide of the virtues, is right reason applied to action, by which a woman discerns the true good and the right means to achieve it, so that it directs all the other moral virtues.

Justice, Giving Each Their Due

Justice is the firm will to give each person what is owed to them, to God and to neighbor, so that it disposes a woman to right and fair dealing with everyone and to rendering God the worship He is due. Justice is the virtue of giving each one their due, the constant and firm will to render to God and to neighbor what is owed, so that by justice a woman gives God the worship and obedience due Him and gives her neighbor fairness, honesty, respect for their rights, and what she owes them, dealing rightly and fairly with all, rendering to each what is theirs. This means justice disposes a woman to right relationship with God and others, to fairness, honesty, and the rendering of what is owed, so that she deals justly with everyone, giving each their due rather than taking what is not hers or withholding what she owes. The woman who grows in justice gives each their due, dealing rightly and fairly with God and neighbor. Justice, giving each their due, is the firm will to render to God and neighbor what is owed, so that it disposes a woman to right and fair dealing with everyone and to rendering God the worship He is due.

Why These Two Matter

Prudence and justice are foundational because a good life requires both seeing rightly what to do and acting rightly toward others, so that without prudence a woman acts blindly and without justice she wrongs those around her. These two cardinal virtues matter greatly because a good life depends on them, for without prudence a woman cannot judge well what to do, however good her intentions, acting blindly or foolishly, and without justice she fails in her duties to God and others, wronging those around her, so that prudence and justice are essential to living well, the first governing her judgment and the second her dealings with others. This means a woman needs both prudence and justice for a good life, the one to see rightly and the other to act rightly toward others, so that these foundational virtues are not optional but necessary, governing how she judges and how she treats everyone around her. The woman who sees why these two matter cultivates prudence and justice as essential to judging well and dealing rightly with others. Why these two matter is that a good life requires both seeing rightly what to do and acting rightly toward others, so that without prudence a woman acts blindly and without justice she wrongs those around her.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fortitude and Temperance

Standing Firm, Staying Ordered

The other two cardinal virtues are fortitude, which gives a woman courage and endurance in the face of difficulty, and temperance, which orders her desires and pleasures, two strengths by which she holds firm and stays rightly ordered. Understanding fortitude and temperance, the remaining cardinal virtues, reveals the strengths by which a woman perseveres through hardship and governs her appetites.

Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives. — Titus 2:12

Fortitude, Courage That Endures

Fortitude is the virtue of courage, which strengthens a woman to face difficulty, danger, and suffering for the sake of the good, enabling her both to undertake hard things and to endure them. Fortitude is the virtue of courage and endurance, which gives a woman the strength to face difficulty, fear, danger, and suffering for the sake of what is good and right, enabling her both to undertake hard and frightening things when duty requires and, even more, to endure, to persevere through long hardship, opposition, and suffering without giving up, so that fortitude is the strength to stand firm in the good against all that would deter her. This means fortitude equips a woman to do and endure hard things for the good, to face her fears and persevere through her sufferings, so that she is not deterred from the good by difficulty but holds firm, courageous in action and steadfast in endurance. The woman who grows in fortitude faces difficulty with courage and endures hardship for the good, standing firm against all that would deter her. Fortitude, courage that endures, strengthens a woman to face difficulty, danger, and suffering for the good, enabling her both to undertake hard things and to endure them without giving up.

Temperance, Ordering the Desires

Temperance is the virtue that orders a woman's desires and pleasures, moderating her appetites so that they serve the good rather than ruling her, bringing her inner life into right order. Temperance is the virtue that moderates and orders a woman's desires and pleasures, governing her appetites for food, drink, comfort, and the other goods that attract her, so that they are enjoyed in right measure and serve her true good rather than ruling her, bringing her passions and desires into the order of reason and keeping her free from being mastered by her appetites. This means temperance brings a woman's inner life into right order, moderating her desires so that she governs them rather than being governed by them, so that she enjoys good things rightly and is not enslaved to pleasure or appetite but free and ordered within. The woman who grows in temperance orders her desires and pleasures, governing her appetites so they serve the good rather than ruling her. Temperance, ordering the desires, moderates a woman's appetites and

pleasures so that they serve her true good rather than ruling her, bringing her inner life into right order.

The Strength to Be Free

Fortitude and temperance together give a woman a deep freedom, the strength to stand firm against outer difficulty and to govern her inner desires, so that she is mastered neither by circumstances nor by appetites. These two virtues together confer a profound freedom, for fortitude frees a woman from being mastered by fear, difficulty, and suffering, enabling her to stand firm against external pressures, and temperance frees her from being mastered by her own desires and appetites, enabling her to govern her inner life, so that between them she is freed from domination both from without and from within, strong and self-possessed. This means fortitude and temperance make a woman truly free, neither driven by outer difficulties nor enslaved to inner desires, so that she possesses herself and acts from her own ordered will rather than being pushed about by circumstance or appetite. The woman who has the strength to be free stands firm against difficulty and governs her desires, mastered neither by circumstances nor by appetites. The strength to be free is given by fortitude and temperance together, the one standing firm against outer difficulty and the other governing inner desire, so that a woman is mastered neither by circumstances nor by appetites.

CHAPTER FIVE

Built by Repeated Choice

Virtue Is a Habit

A crucial truth about virtue is that it is a habit, built not by a single act but by repeated choice over time, which means that virtue is always within a woman's reach and always costs something to acquire. Understanding that virtue is a habit built by repeated choice reveals both how virtue is acquired and why it is always available and always costly.

Train yourself for godliness, for godliness is of value in every way. — 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Virtue Grows Through Practice

Virtue is acquired like any habit, through practice, by repeatedly choosing the good until the choice becomes a settled disposition, so that a woman grows in virtue by doing virtuous acts again and again. A virtue is not given all at once but grown through practice, for just as a skill is acquired by repeated exercise, so a virtue is built by repeatedly

choosing and doing the good, each act of courage making a woman more courageous, each act of patience more patient, until the repeated choices settle into a stable disposition, the virtue formed by practice as a habit is formed by repetition. This means a woman acquires virtue the way she acquires any habit, by doing the corresponding acts over and over until they become second nature, so that growth in virtue is a matter of practice, of repeatedly choosing the good until it becomes who she is. The woman who understands that virtue grows through practice builds it by repeatedly choosing the good, forming the habit through exercise. Virtue grows through practice, built by repeatedly choosing and doing the good until it settles into a stable disposition, so that a woman acquires virtue the way she acquires any habit, through exercise.

Always Available

Because virtue is built by choice, it is always available to a woman, for in any moment she can choose the virtuous act and so take a step toward the virtue, regardless of her feelings or circumstances. Since virtue is acquired through repeated choice, it is always within a woman's reach, for whatever her feelings or circumstances, she can in any given moment choose the virtuous act, choose patience over irritation, courage over fear, honesty over deceit, and each such choice builds the virtue, so that growth in virtue is always available, never dependent on feeling virtuous but only on choosing the good. This means a woman is never without the means to grow in virtue, for the virtuous choice is always available to her in the present moment, so that she can begin or continue building any virtue at any time, simply by choosing the good act now. The woman who knows virtue is always available can choose the good in any moment, taking a step toward virtue regardless of feeling or circumstance. Always available, virtue can be built in any moment by choosing the virtuous act, so that growth in virtue is never dependent on feeling or circumstance but always within a woman's reach.

Always Costly

Because virtue requires choosing the good against contrary inclinations, it is always costly, demanding real effort and self-denial, so that building virtue is never easy but always worth its cost. If virtue is always available, it is also always costly, for building it means repeatedly choosing the good against contrary inclinations, choosing courage when fear pulls the other way, temperance when desire resists, patience when irritation rises, so that each virtuous choice costs real effort and self-denial, and the formation of virtue is never easy but always demands something of a woman. This means a woman should expect the building of virtue to be costly, requiring sustained effort against her contrary inclinations, so that she does not imagine virtue will come easily but accepts its cost, knowing that the strengths of character worth having are built only through real and

repeated effort. The woman who accepts that virtue is always costly builds it through real effort and self-denial, not expecting it to come easily. Always costly, virtue demands real effort and self-denial, for building it means choosing the good against contrary inclinations, so that it is never easy but always worth its cost.

CHAPTER SIX

The Role of Grace

Virtue as Gift and Effort Together

Though virtue is built by a woman's repeated choices, it is not the work of effort alone, for grace is essential, infusing the theological virtues directly and elevating and strengthening the acquired virtues, so that virtue is gift and effort together. Understanding the role of grace in virtue reveals that a woman builds virtue not by her own power alone but in cooperation with the grace that enables and elevates it.

God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. — 2 Corinthians 9:8

The Infused Virtues

The theological virtues and the infused moral virtues are given directly by grace, not built by effort, so that a woman receives these virtues as gifts of God rather than acquiring them by her own practice. Some virtues are not acquired by human effort at all but infused directly by God's grace, chiefly the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and with them the infused moral virtues that accompany grace, so that these virtues are received as gifts, poured into the soul by God rather than built up by repeated choice, given to a woman in Baptism and grace rather than earned by her practice. This means a woman possesses, by grace, virtues she did not build, the theological virtues and the infused moral virtues given with grace, so that her life of virtue rests partly on gifts received rather than only on strengths acquired, the grace of God supplying what effort cannot. The woman who understands the infused virtues receives faith, hope, and charity as gifts of grace rather than achievements of effort. The infused virtues, chiefly faith, hope, and charity, are given directly by grace rather than built by effort, so that a woman receives these virtues as gifts of God rather than acquiring them by her own practice.

Grace Elevates and Strengthens

Grace does not only infuse the theological virtues but elevates and strengthens the acquired virtues, directing them to God and empowering a woman to build them, so that even her effort to grow in virtue is itself helped by grace. Beyond infusing the theological virtues, grace works upon the acquired virtues too, elevating them by directing them to God as their supernatural end, strengthening a woman's efforts to build them, and supplying by actual grace the help she needs to choose the good, so that even the virtues she builds by practice are built in cooperation with grace, which elevates and empowers her effort rather than leaving her to her own strength. This means a woman's building of virtue is itself a work of grace, for grace elevates her acquired virtues toward God and strengthens her efforts to grow in them, so that she builds virtue not by her own power alone but with the help of grace at every step. The woman who understands that grace elevates and strengthens builds virtue in cooperation with the grace that empowers and directs her effort. Grace elevates and strengthens the acquired virtues, directing them to God and empowering a woman's efforts, so that even her building of virtue is helped by grace rather than accomplished by her own power alone.

Gift and Effort Together

Virtue is therefore the fruit of grace and effort together, a woman cooperating with the grace God gives by her own repeated choices, so that she neither waits passively for virtue nor builds it by willpower alone. The life of virtue is neither pure gift received without effort nor pure achievement built by willpower alone, but the fruit of grace and effort together, for God infuses the theological virtues and supplies the grace that elevates and strengthens, while a woman cooperates by her own repeated choices to build the acquired virtues and to exercise the infused ones, so that virtue grows through the joining of divine grace and human effort. This means a woman builds virtue by cooperating with grace, bringing her own repeated choices while relying on the grace that enables and elevates them, so that she neither passively waits for God to make her virtuous nor strains to build virtue by her own strength, but works with the grace God gives. The woman who understands gift and effort together builds virtue by cooperating with grace, joining her choices to the help God provides. Gift and effort together make virtue, a woman cooperating with the grace God gives by her own repeated choices, so that she neither waits passively nor builds virtue by willpower alone.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Virtuous Woman

What Virtue Looks Like in Her Life

Virtue is not an abstraction but takes concrete shape in a woman's life, in the home, the workplace, the parish, and the culture, where the virtuous woman is among the scarcest and most needed resources in the Church and the world today. Understanding what a virtuous woman actually looks like and why she is so needed reveals the concrete beauty and the urgency of the virtues in a woman's life.

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
— Proverbs 31:30

Virtue in the Everyday

The virtuous woman shows her virtue not in grand gestures but in the everyday, in patience with her family, integrity at work, charity in her parish, and faithfulness in the culture, so that virtue appears in the concrete texture of her ordinary life. A woman's virtue is displayed not chiefly in dramatic moments but in the everyday texture of her life, in the patience and love she shows her family, the honesty and diligence of her work, the charity and faithfulness of her parish life, the integrity and courage with which she lives in a culture that often opposes the good, so that the virtuous woman is recognized in the ordinary fabric of her days, her virtues at work in her home, her job, her church, and her world. This means virtue takes concrete shape in a woman's everyday life, in the ordinary acts of patience, honesty, charity, and courage that fill her days, so that she lives out the virtues not in abstraction but in the real circumstances of home, work, parish, and culture. The woman who lives virtue in the everyday shows her character in the ordinary acts of her daily life, her virtues at work in every sphere. Virtue in the everyday shows the virtuous woman in the concrete texture of her life, in patience with family, integrity at work, charity in her parish, and faithfulness in the culture, so that virtue appears in her ordinary days.

Scarce and Deeply Needed

Virtuous women are among the scarcest and most needed resources in the Church and the world today, for a culture that has largely abandoned virtue hungers for the strength, integrity, and love that virtuous women bring. In a time when virtue is widely neglected and even mocked, genuinely virtuous women have become scarce, and yet they are among the most needed resources in the Church and the world, for the home needs the virtuous wife and mother, the parish needs the virtuous woman of faith and charity, the workplace needs her integrity, and the culture hungers, often without knowing it, for the strength, honesty, patience, and love that only virtuous women can supply, so that the virtuous woman is both rare and desperately needed. This means a woman's pursuit of virtue is not a private self-improvement but a service of great value, for virtuous women

are scarce and deeply needed, so that by becoming virtuous she becomes exactly what her family, her parish, her workplace, and her culture most need. The woman who understands that virtuous women are scarce and deeply needed sees her pursuit of virtue as a vital service to a world that hungers for it. Scarce and deeply needed, virtuous women are among the most valuable resources in the Church and the world today, for a culture that has abandoned virtue hungers for the strength, integrity, and love they bring.

Becoming Who You Were Made to Be

In growing in virtue a woman becomes who she was made to be, for the virtues are the fulfillment of her nature and her truest self, so that the pursuit of virtue is the pursuit of her own fullest flourishing. The deepest truth about the virtues is that in acquiring them a woman becomes who she was made to be, for the virtues are not an alien imposition but the fulfillment of her nature, the strengths that make her most fully herself, most fully alive, most fully the woman God created her to be, so that growth in virtue is growth into her own truest self and fullest flourishing. This means a woman's pursuit of virtue is the pursuit of her own fulfillment, for the virtuous woman is the fully realized woman, becoming through virtue who she was made to be, so that the virtues are the path not to a diminished life but to the fullness of the person God created her to become. The woman who understands that virtue means becoming who she was made to be pursues the virtues as the path to her own fullest self. Becoming who you were made to be is the deepest meaning of the virtues, for they are the fulfillment of a woman's nature and her truest self, so that the pursuit of virtue is the pursuit of her own fullest flourishing.

CONCLUSION

Become Who You Are Made to Be

The woman who is always becoming someone now knows the virtues that shape her into who she was made to be. We have seen what virtue is, a stable strength of character and not a feeling; the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, given by grace and directed to God, the greatest of which is love; the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, on which the moral life hinges; that virtue is a habit built by repeated choice, always available and always costly; the role of grace, which infuses and elevates virtue so that it is gift and effort together; and what the virtuous woman looks like in her everyday life, scarce and deeply needed, becoming through virtue who she was made to be.

Through all of it runs a single call: become who you are made to be. The virtues are not a set of rules or a vague niceness but the architecture of your truest self, the strengths that make you fully the woman God created you to become, built by grace and choice over the course of a lifetime. To pursue them is to pursue your own fullest flourishing and to become what the Church and the world most need.

So become who you are made to be. Understand virtue as a stable strength of character, and seek to become virtuous rather than merely to feel so. Cultivate faith, hope, and love, the theological virtues that unite you to God. Build prudence to see rightly, justice to deal rightly, fortitude to stand firm, and temperance to stay ordered. Grow in virtue by repeated choice, knowing it is always available and always costly. Cooperate with the grace that infuses and elevates virtue, joining your effort to God's gift. And let your virtue take concrete shape in your home, your work, your parish, and your culture, where virtuous women are scarce and deeply needed. You are always becoming someone. By grace and choice, become who you were made to be, the virtuous woman God created you to become.

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