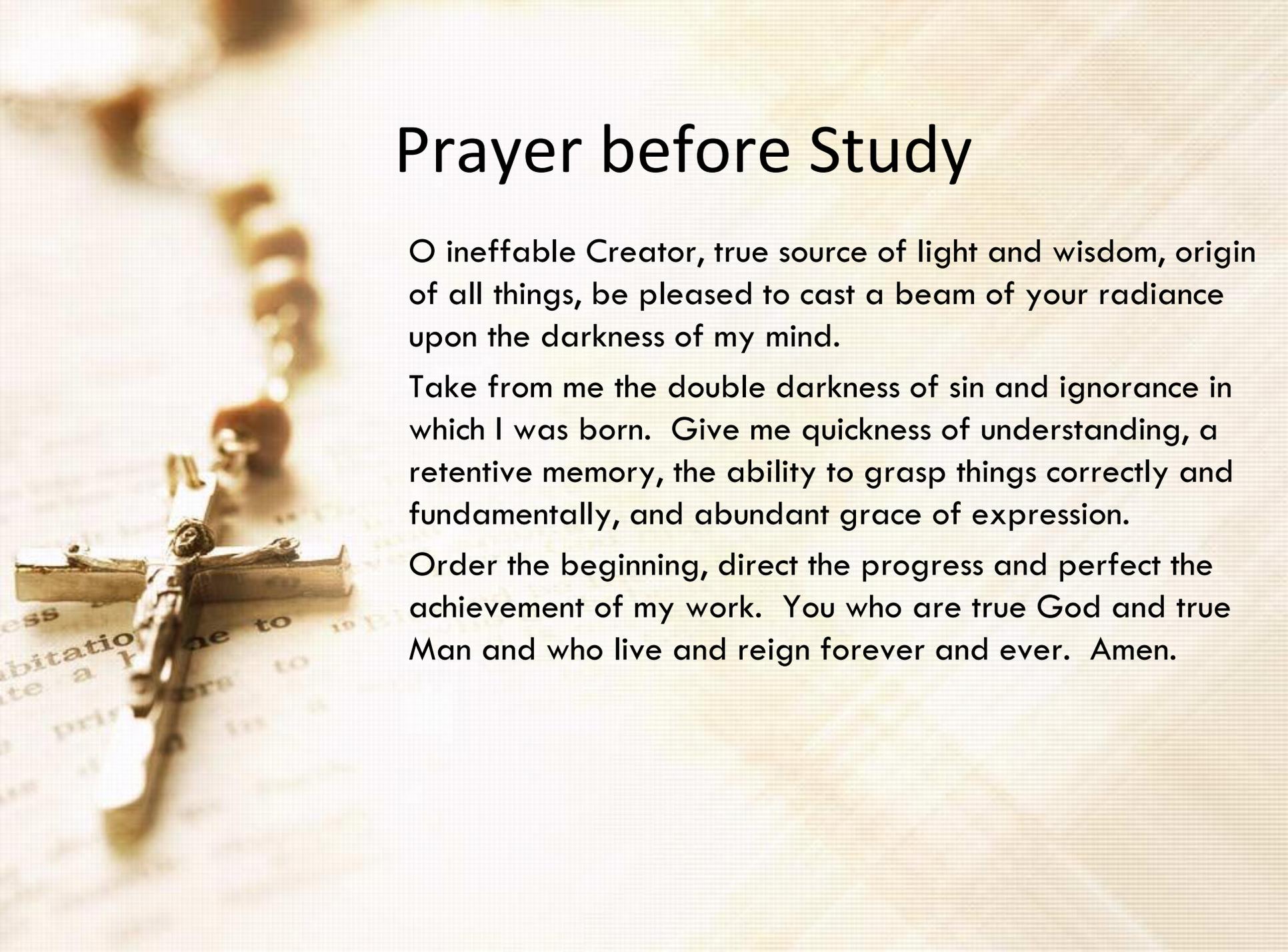


# Moral Virtues and Christian Discipleship

*“Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” -Mark 10:17*

*“Whoever wishes to be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.” -Luke 9:23*

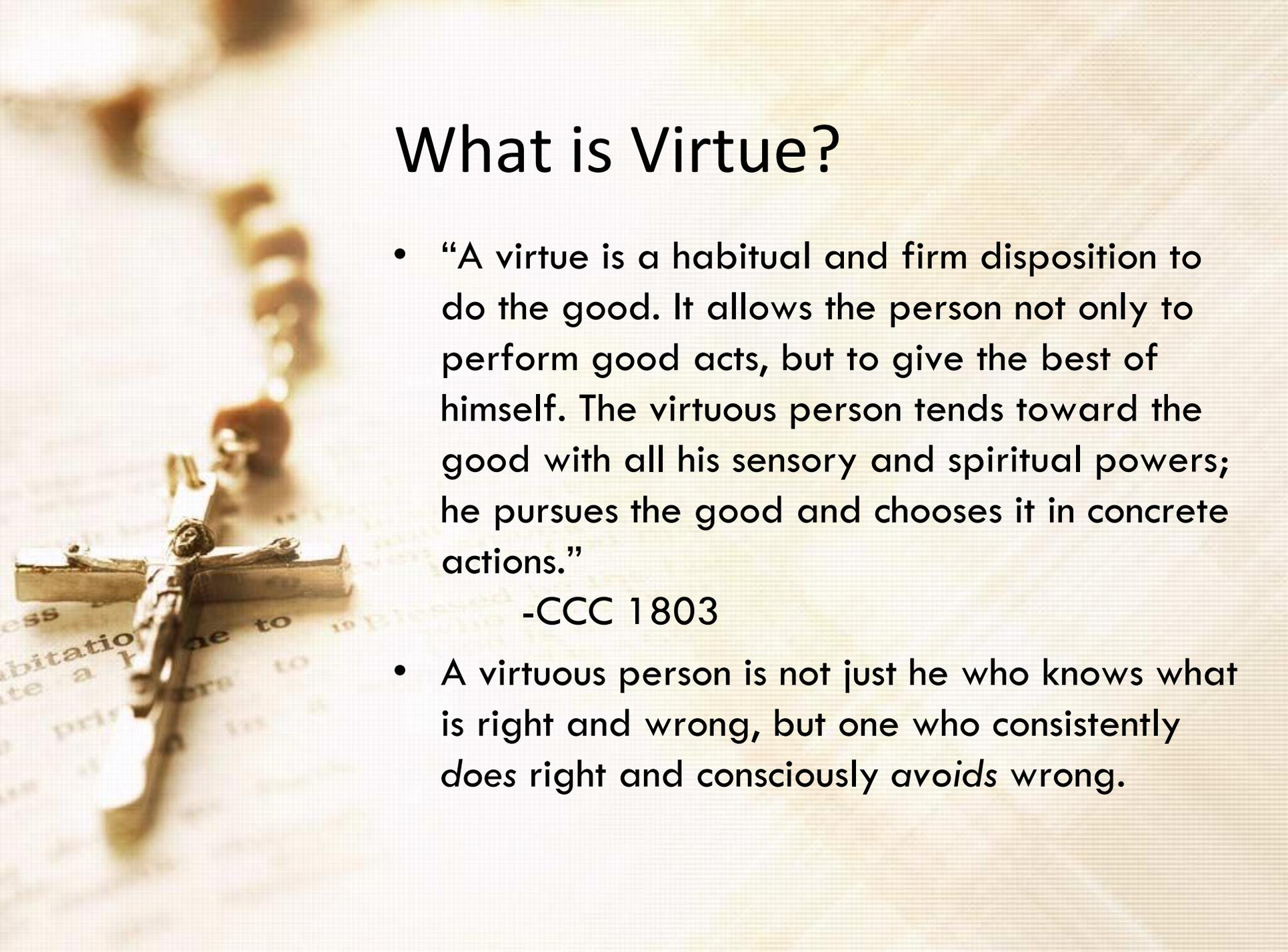


# Prayer before Study

O ineffable Creator, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all things, be pleased to cast a beam of your radiance upon the darkness of my mind.

Take from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance in which I was born. Give me quickness of understanding, a retentive memory, the ability to grasp things correctly and fundamentally, and abundant grace of expression.

Order the beginning, direct the progress and perfect the achievement of my work. You who are true God and true Man and who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.



# What is Virtue?

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

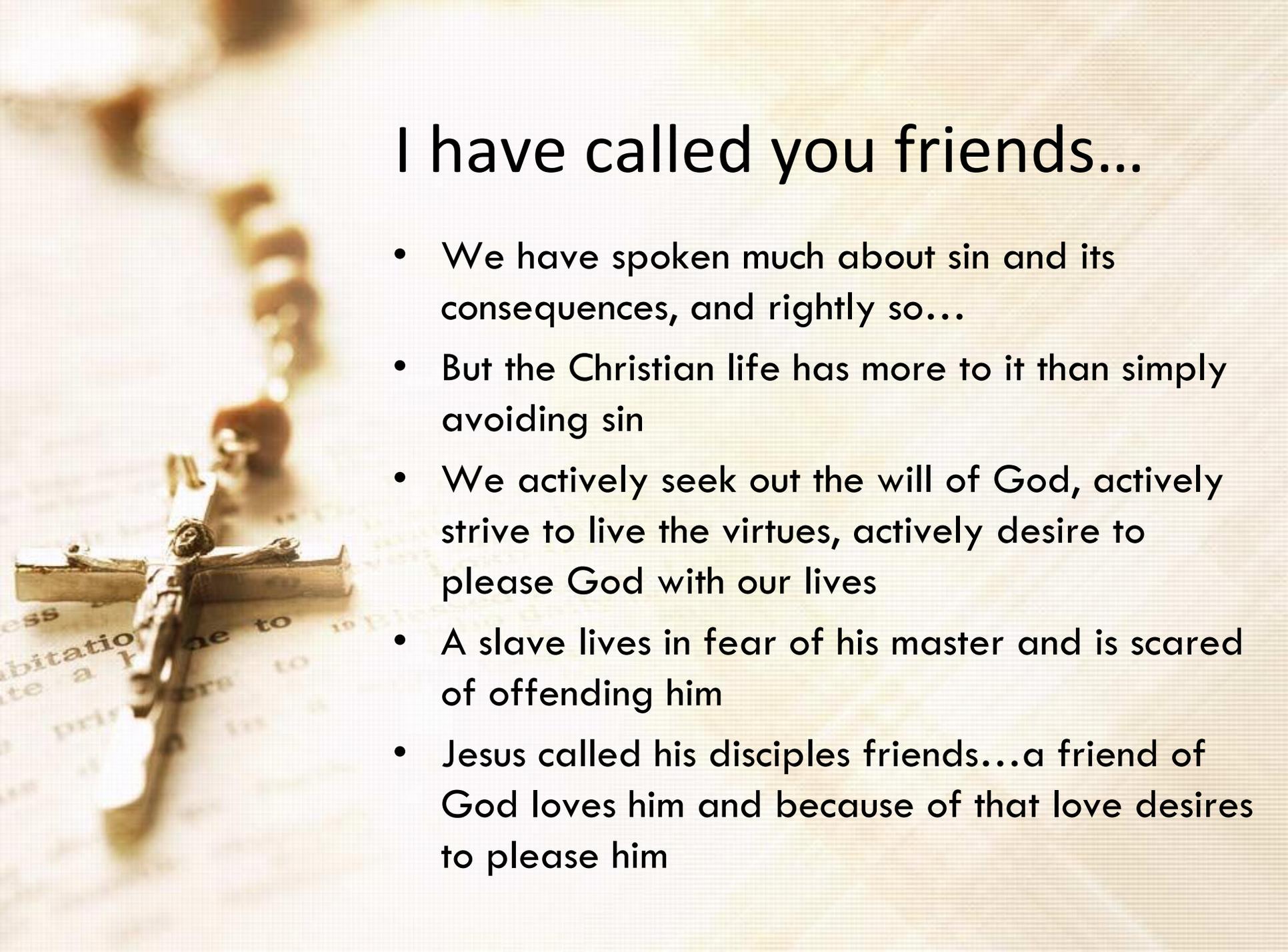
-CCC 1803

- A virtuous person is not just he who knows what is right and wrong, but one who consistently *does* right and consciously *avoids* wrong.

# What is Virtue?

- Virtue consists in making a free and deliberate choice to act well in pursuit of the good.
  - The pursuit and attainment of the good leads to true happiness; thus, the virtuous life is the happy life, the life that leads to ultimate happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven and the Beatific Vision.
- Though it is true that only humans can act virtuously, it is even more true to say that acting virtuously is what truly makes us human and separates us from the animal world.





# I have called you friends...

- We have spoken much about sin and its consequences, and rightly so...
- But the Christian life has more to it than simply avoiding sin
- We actively seek out the will of God, actively strive to live the virtues, actively desire to please God with our lives
- A slave lives in fear of his master and is scared of offending him
- Jesus called his disciples friends...a friend of God loves him and because of that love desires to please him

# The Habitual Nature of the Virtues

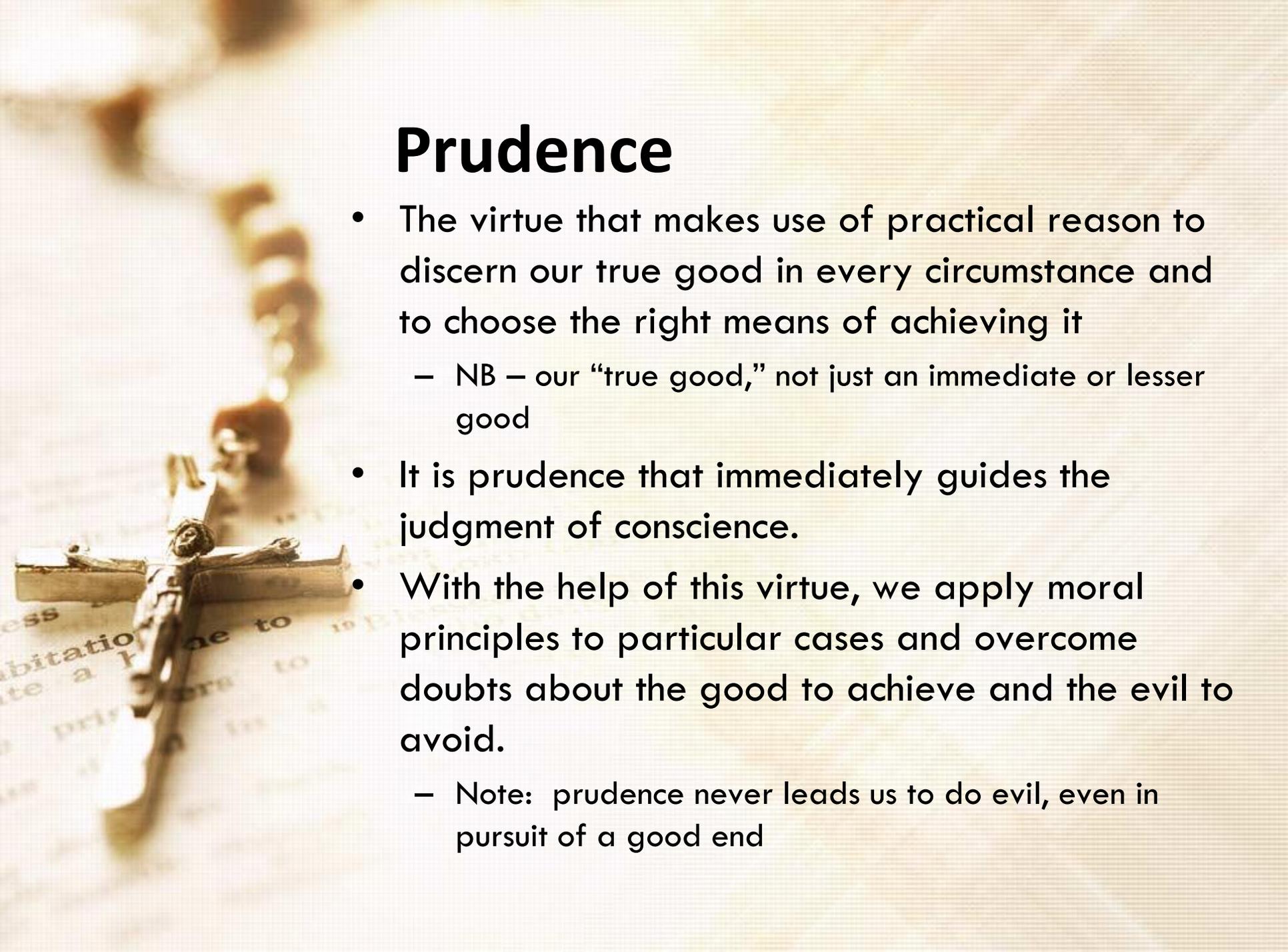
- Virtue (like vice, its opposite) is a habit.
  - A habit forms when an act is repeated enough times to where one acquires a disposition to the act
- Who we are is determined by our overall character
- Our character is determined by the habits we cultivate
- Habits are formed from strings of individual actions repeated over and over
- Actions begin in the will
- Willing finds its origin in thoughts.
  - Thus, there is a strong connection between *thinking rightly* and *acting rightly*.





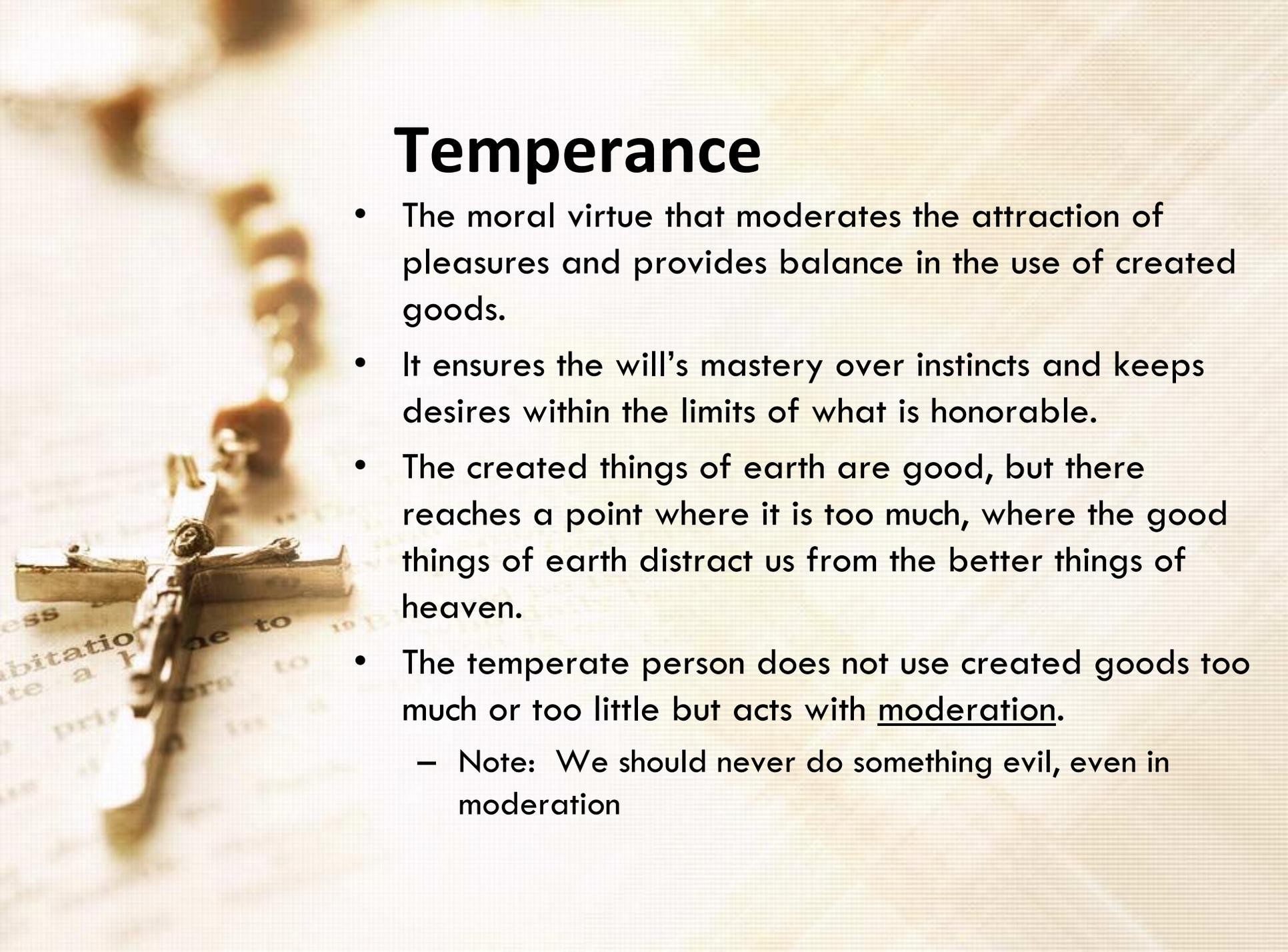
# The Cardinal Virtues

- The cardinal virtues are named from the Latin word *cardo*, which means, “hinge,” meaning that all other virtues revolve around or “hinge” on these four.
- The cardinal virtues are *natural* virtues; this means that they are attainable by any person of good will and are perfections of human nature as such.
- The four cardinal virtues are: **prudence, temperance, justice** and **fortitude**.



# Prudence

- The virtue that makes use of practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it
  - NB – our “true good,” not just an immediate or lesser good
- It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience.
- With the help of this virtue, we apply moral principles to particular cases and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.
  - Note: prudence never leads us to do evil, even in pursuit of a good end



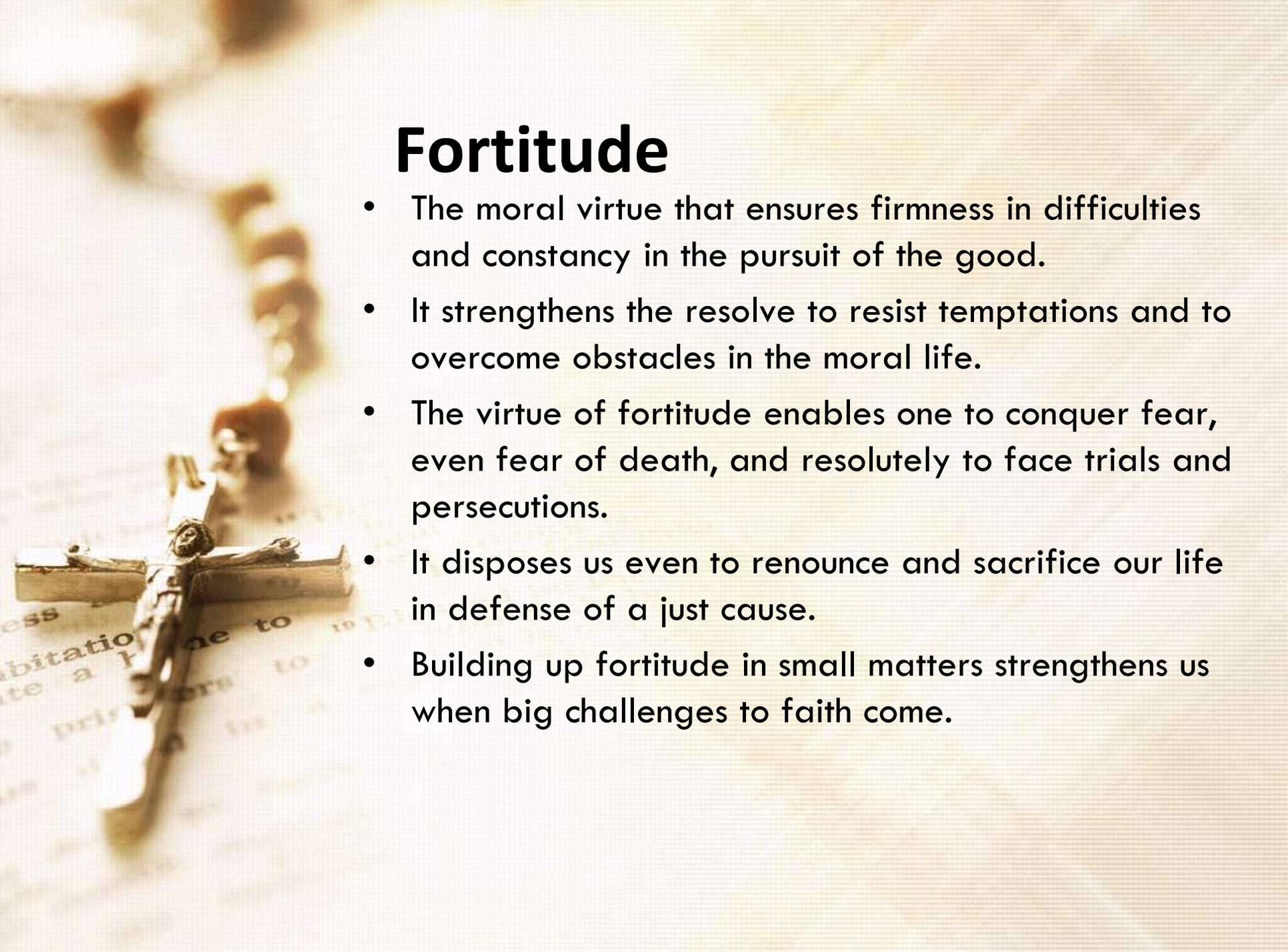
# Temperance

- The moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.
- It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable.
- The created things of earth are good, but there reaches a point where it is too much, where the good things of earth distract us from the better things of heaven.
- The temperate person does not use created goods too much or too little but acts with moderation.
  - Note: We should never do something evil, even in moderation

# Justice

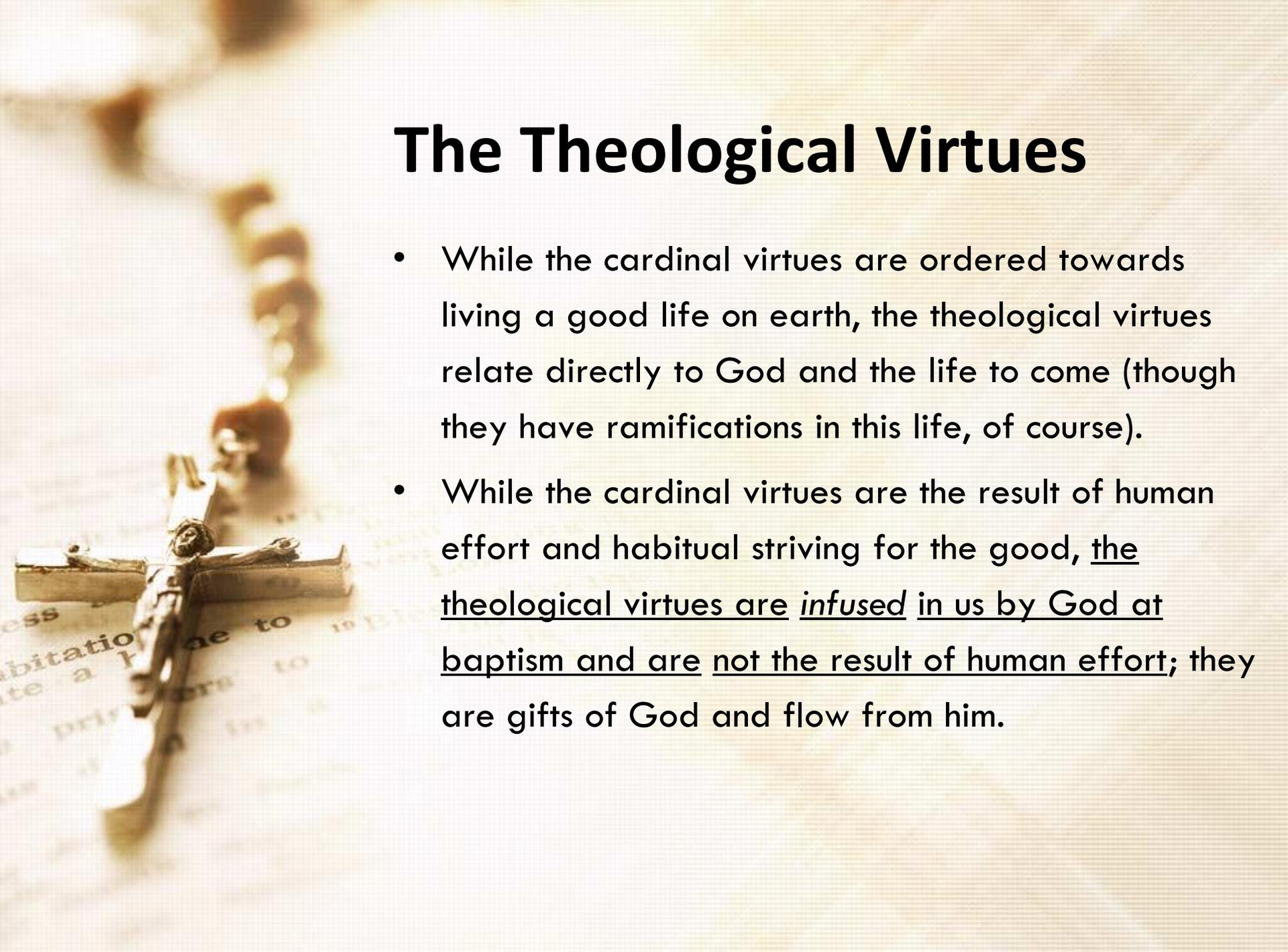
- The moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.
  - In other words, they are owed it – it is their due – and justice leads us to give it to them
- Justice toward God is called the “virtue of religion.”
  - “It is right and just”
- Justice toward neighbors disposes us to respect the rights and dignity of each person and to seek the common good
- It is never just to do evil (towards God or man)





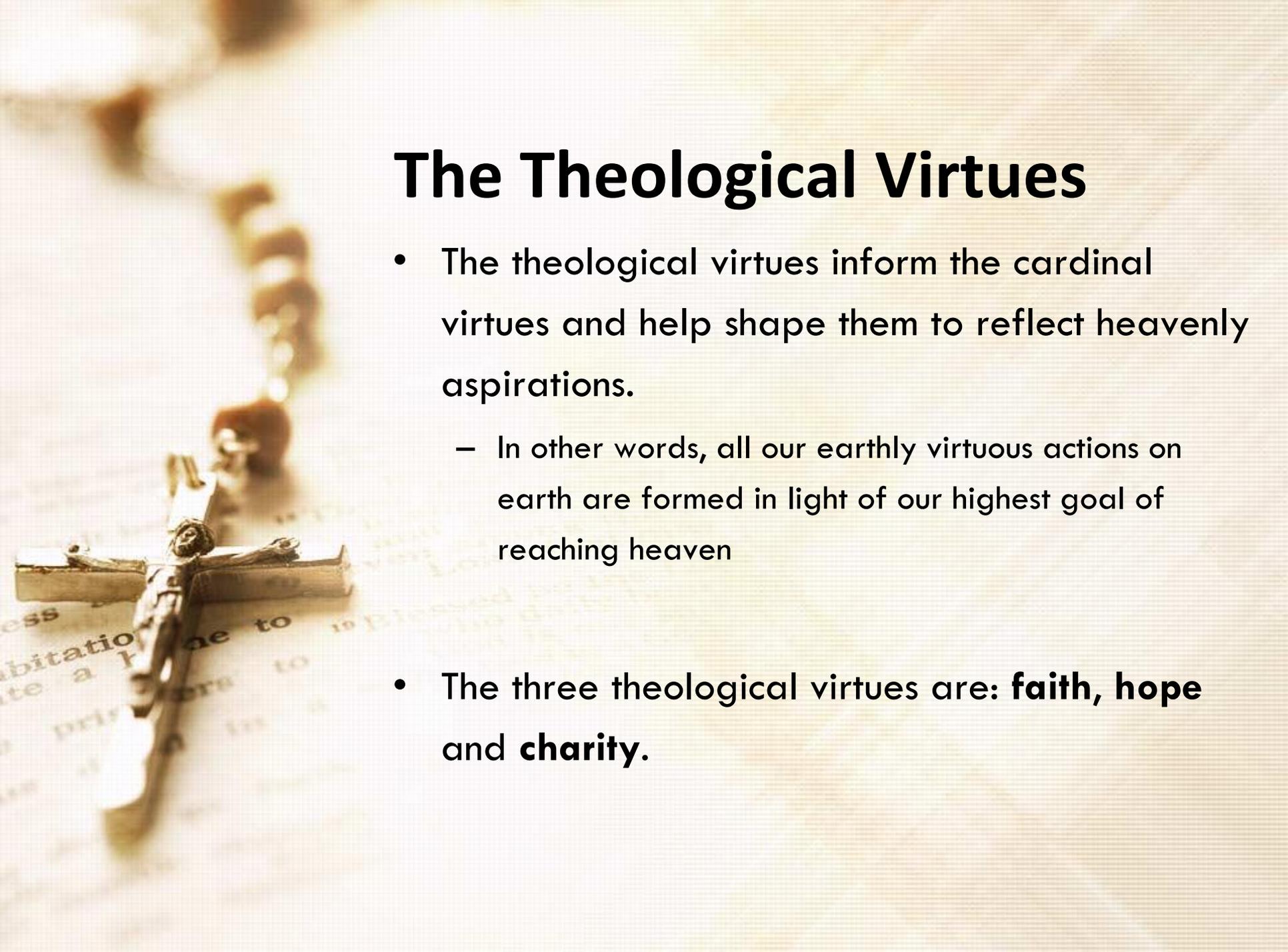
# Fortitude

- The moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.
- It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life.
- The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and resolutely to face trials and persecutions.
- It disposes us even to renounce and sacrifice our life in defense of a just cause.
- Building up fortitude in small matters strengthens us when big challenges to faith come.



# The Theological Virtues

- While the cardinal virtues are ordered towards living a good life on earth, the theological virtues relate directly to God and the life to come (though they have ramifications in this life, of course).
- While the cardinal virtues are the result of human effort and habitual striving for the good, the theological virtues are *infused* in us by God at baptism and are not the result of human effort; they are gifts of God and flow from him.



# The Theological Virtues

- The theological virtues inform the cardinal virtues and help shape them to reflect heavenly aspirations.
  - In other words, all our earthly virtuous actions on earth are formed in light of our highest goal of reaching heaven
- The three theological virtues are: **faith, hope** and **charity**.

# Faith

- Faith is that virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Mother Church proposes for our belief, because God is truth itself.
- By faith, man freely commits his entire self to God
  - For this reason, the believer seeks to know and do God's will
  - As we said, the moral life consists in more than avoiding sin - important as that is – to include actively seeking to fulfill God's will



# Faith

- The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it...even amidst persecutions, which the Church never lacks...” -  
-CCC1816
- “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” --Mt 10:32



# Hope

- Hope is the confident expectation of divine blessing and the beatific vision of God, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of God's grace.
- This is a supernatural virtue and not mere earthly optimism
  - We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will.
- In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere in faith to the end and to obtain the joy of heaven



# Hope

- It keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude
- It is the trusting expectation of heavenly bliss, though not presumptive.
- We hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will



# Charity

- Charity is that virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.
  - The practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by charity
- Jesus made charity the 'new commandment,' summing up the entire Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments with the command to love God and neighbor



# Charity

- Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love.
- Charity is sometimes called 'love,' but the word 'charity' denotes the proper idea – it is love of God for his own sake, and love of neighbors for their own sake and for the love of God
- Through charity, the Christian believer most perfectly imitates Christ, who 'loved us to the end' and manifested God's love for all people through his sacrificial death on the Cross.
- It is the preeminent virtue.



# Prayer

- Prayer is the cornerstone of the Christian life, the secret of every triumph of every saint and the one practice that can be universally advised at all times and in every occasion.
  - “Pray without ceasing,” St. Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.
- Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God



# Definition of Prayer

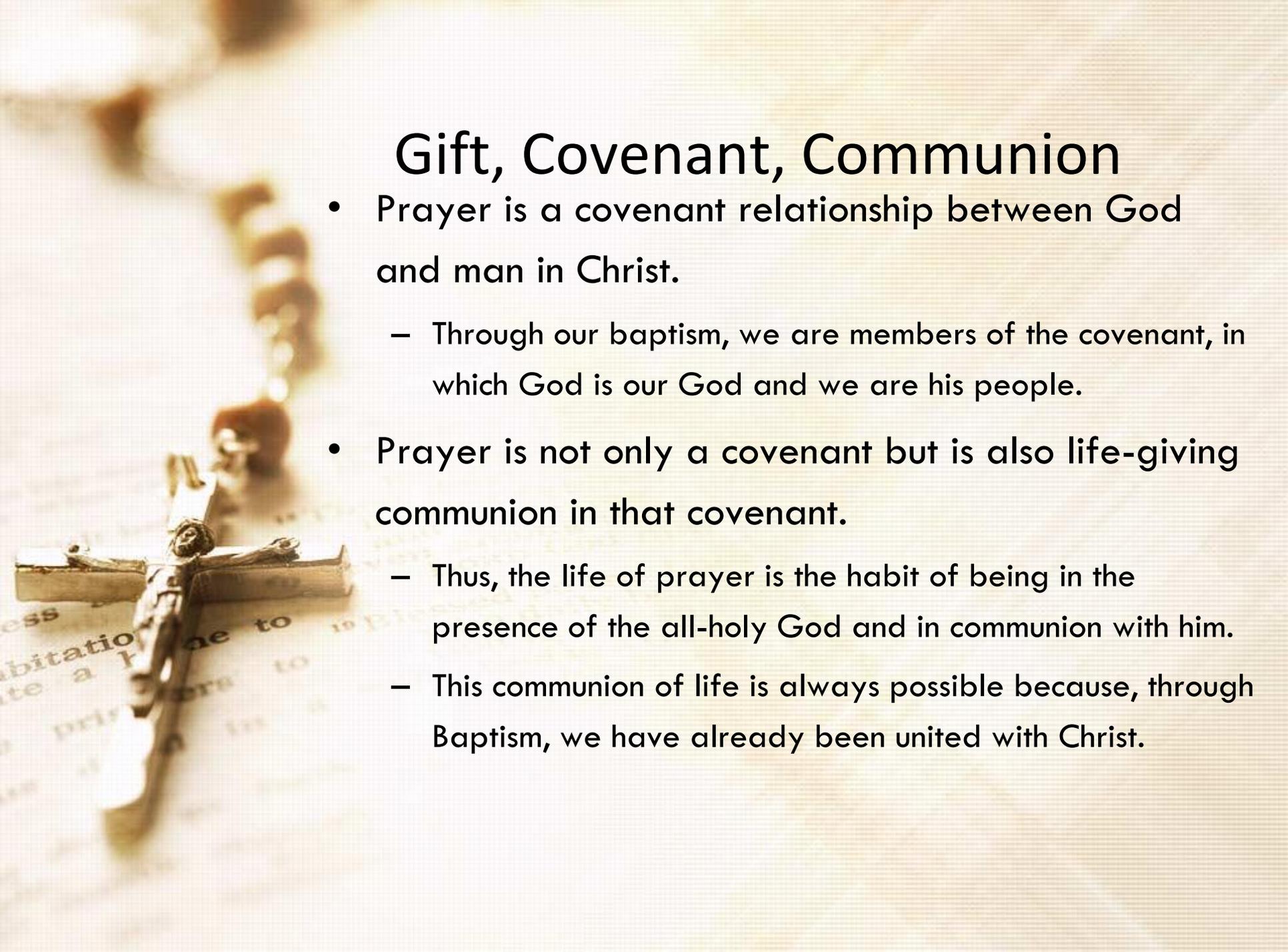
- St. Therese of Lisieux said, “For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”
- Man desires not only to know God, but to have communion with him. Thus, prayer touches on the deepest aspect of man’s being
- Prayer is a means of uniting man with the object of his love, who is God.



# Gift, Covenant, Communion

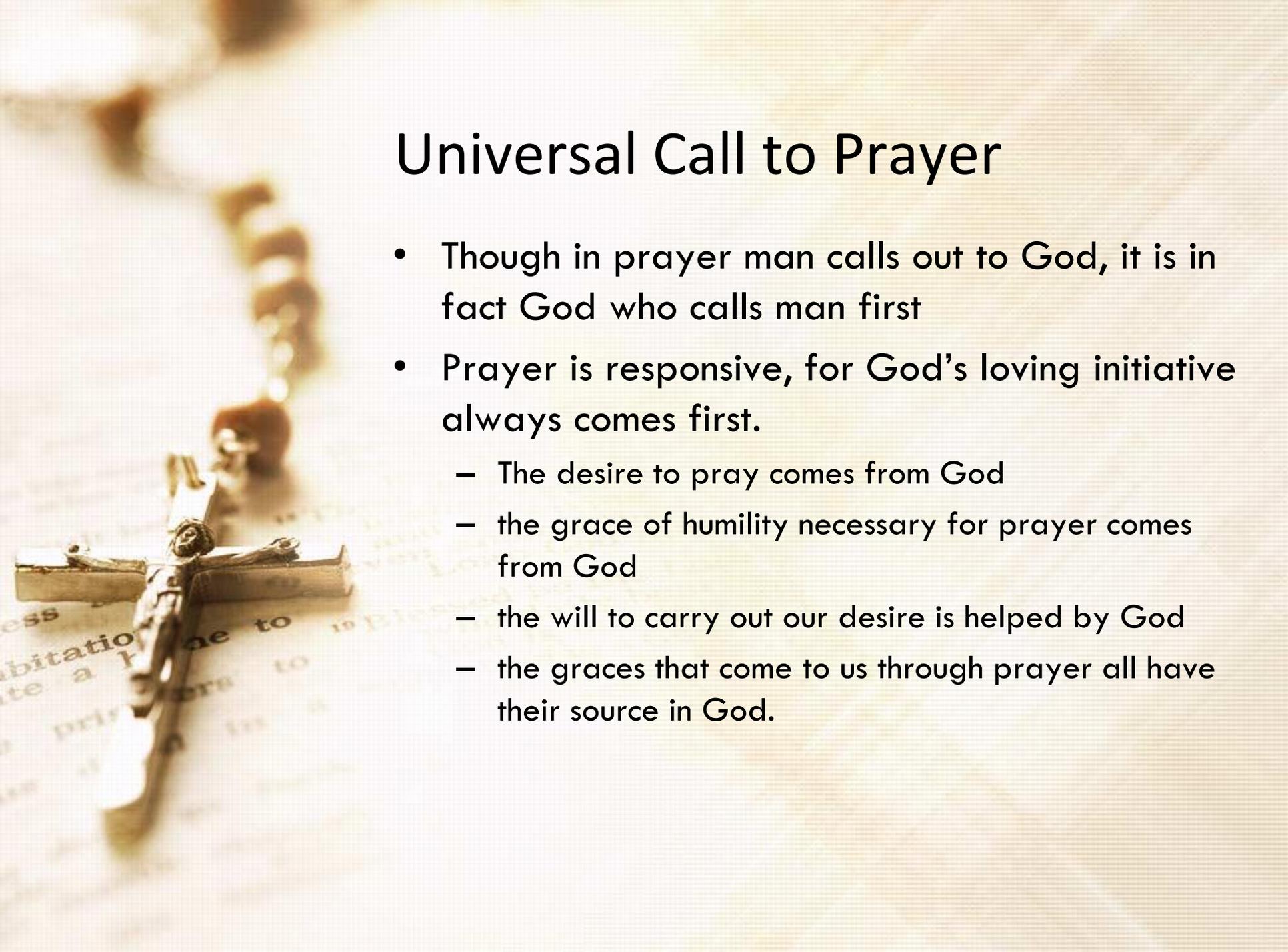
- First, prayer is a gift from God
  - Recognizing that this ability to call upon God is a gift, the proper attitude for prayer is **humility**.
  - God has placed the desire to pray within us. Our prayer is a response to that desire
- Prayer comes forth from the depths of man, and it is in these depths that mankind encounters God.
  - How important it is to remember that our faith cannot be reduced to a list of rules – it is about an encounter and relationship with God!





# Gift, Covenant, Communion

- Prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ.
  - Through our baptism, we are members of the covenant, in which God is our God and we are his people.
- Prayer is not only a covenant but is also life-giving communion in that covenant.
  - Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the all-holy God and in communion with him.
  - This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ.



# Universal Call to Prayer

- Though in prayer man calls out to God, it is in fact God who calls man first
- Prayer is responsive, for God's loving initiative always comes first.
  - The desire to pray comes from God
  - the grace of humility necessary for prayer comes from God
  - the will to carry out our desire is helped by God
  - the graces that come to us through prayer all have their source in God.



# The Prayers of Jesus

- As a man, Jesus learned to pray according to his human heart.
- Jesus prays before the decisive moments of his mission:
  - before his Father's witness to him during his baptism and Transfiguration
  - before his own fulfillment of the Father's plan of love by his Passion.
  - And many other times as mentioned the Gospels
- Jesus often draws apart to pray in solitude, on a mountain, preferably at night.

# Jesus teaches us how to pray

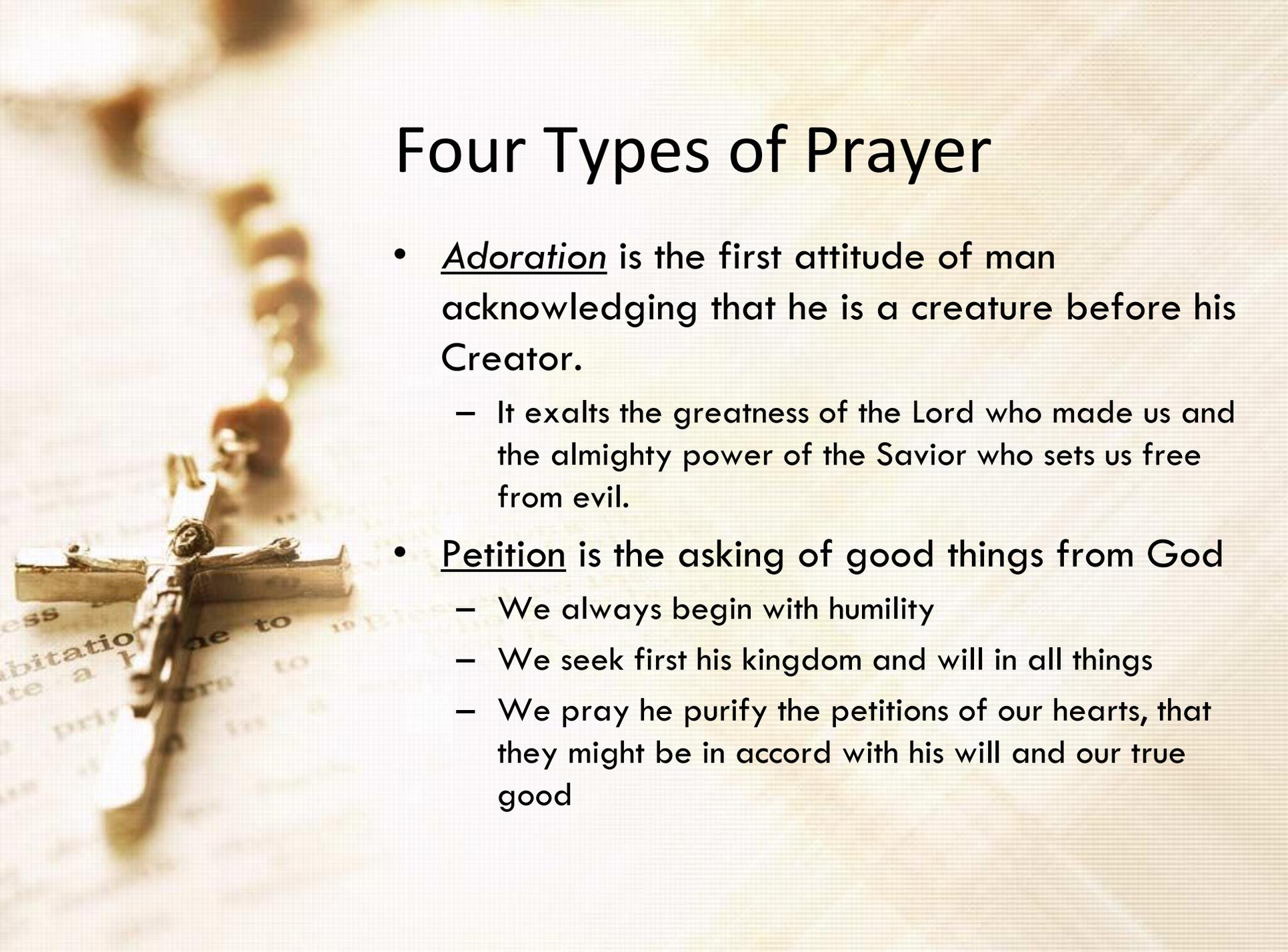
- From the *Sermon on the Mount* onwards, Jesus insists
  - on *conversion of heart*
  - reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar
  - love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors,
  - prayer to the Father in secret
  - not heaping up empty phrases
  - prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart
  - purity of heart
  - seeking the Kingdom before all else.
- *Filial boldness*: "Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you receive it, and you will." Such is the power of prayer and of faith that does not doubt: "all things are possible to him who believes."





# Jesus teaches us how to pray

- The prayer of faith consists not only in saying "Lord, Lord," but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father.
  - Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan.
- In Jesus "the Kingdom of God is at hand." He calls his hearers to conversion and faith, but also to *watchfulness*.
  - In prayer the disciple keeps watch, attentive to "Him Who Is and Him Who is to Come," in memory of his first coming in the lowliness of the flesh, and in the hope of his second coming in glory.
  - In communion with their Master, the disciples' prayer is a battle; only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation.



# Four Types of Prayer

- Adoration is the first attitude of man acknowledging that he is a creature before his Creator.
  - It exalts the greatness of the Lord who made us and the almighty power of the Savior who sets us free from evil.
- Petition is the asking of good things from God
  - We always begin with humility
  - We seek first his kingdom and will in all things
  - We pray he purify the petitions of our hearts, that they might be in accord with his will and our true good



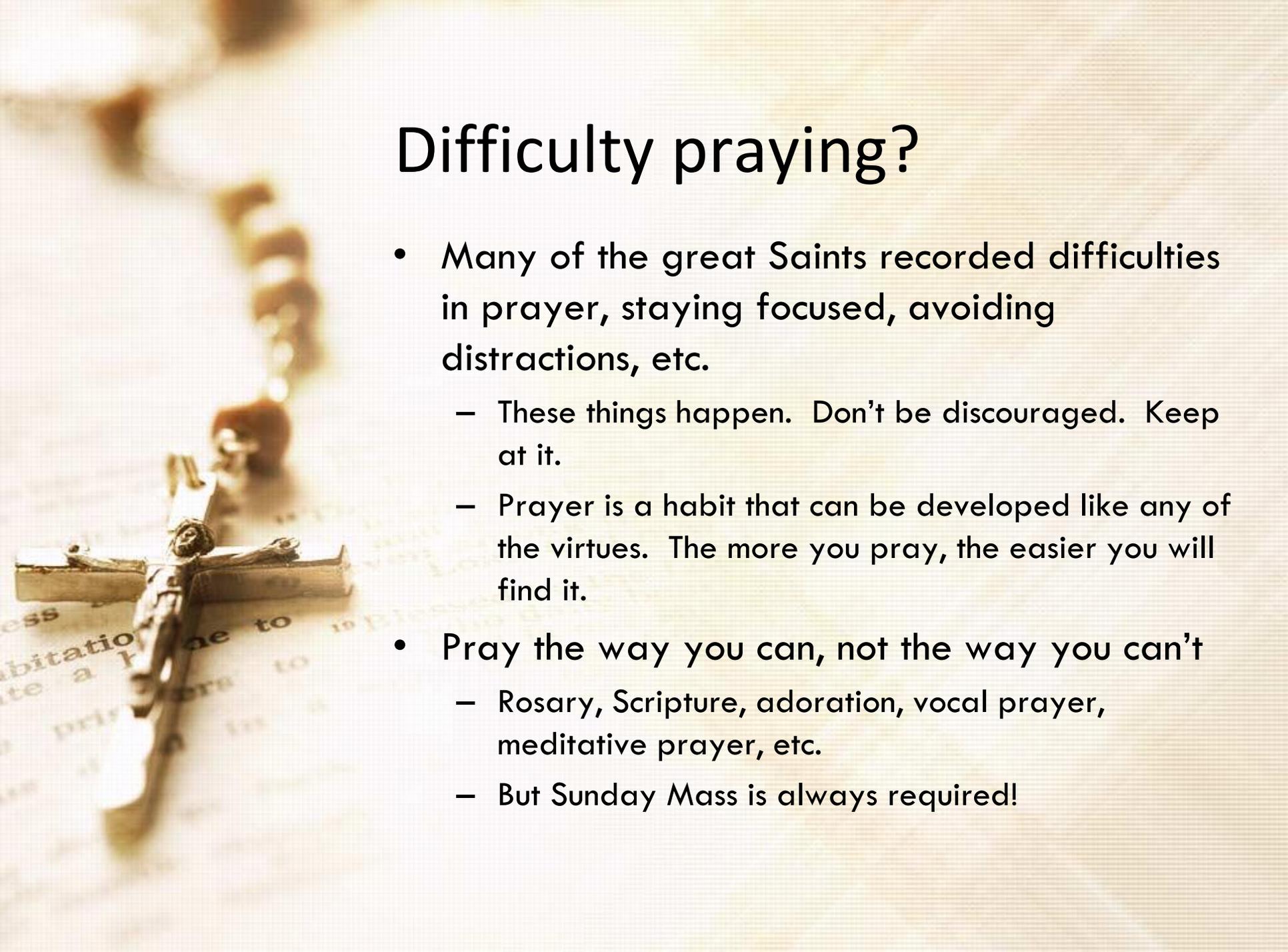
# Four Types of Prayer

- Intercession in Christian prayer is an expression of the communion of saints, with whom we are all connected in Christ through baptism.
- We can (and should) pray for the living and the dead
- In intercessory prayer, he who prays looks "not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others," even to the point of praying for those who do him harm.
- It is an expression of Christian charity – to seek the good of the other for his/her own sake



# Four Types of Prayer

- Thanksgiving characterizes the prayer of the Church which, in celebrating the Eucharist, reveals and becomes more fully what she is.
- The letters of St. Paul often begin and end with thanksgiving, and the Lord Jesus is always present in it:
  - "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you"
  - "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving."
- Try to pray in all four ways every day
- The Mass contains them all!!



# Difficulty praying?

- Many of the great Saints recorded difficulties in prayer, staying focused, avoiding distractions, etc.
  - These things happen. Don't be discouraged. Keep at it.
  - Prayer is a habit that can be developed like any of the virtues. The more you pray, the easier you will find it.
- Pray the way you can, not the way you can't
  - Rosary, Scripture, adoration, vocal prayer, meditative prayer, etc.
  - But Sunday Mass is always required!

# Next Week – the Last class!!

- The Holy Rosary and Marian Devotion
- Catechumens (non-baptized)
  - BIG DAY – Easter Vigil, Saturday, April 3 at 8:00pm
  - Rehearsal – Saturday, April 3 at 10:00am
- All others
  - BIG DAY – Easter Sunday, April 4 at 9:30am
  - Rehearsal – Saturday, April 3 at 11:00am
  - Confessions are available after class tonight
- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.





- Sources: NABRE, CCC, *Catholic Christianity* by Peter J. Kreeft, [www.unamsanctamcatholicam.org](http://www.unamsanctamcatholicam.org)
- Glory be to the Father, and to the +Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.