

Theory 6

TEMPERANCE, VICES and VIRTUES

Temperance

CCC 1809 **Temperance is 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.

Temperance is the virtue that keeps us from doing what is wrong even when our disordered desires are tempting us to choose what is wrong.

Temperance controls our disordered desires for

- Pride with Humility
- Vanity with seeking the Praise of God
- Envy with Goodwill
- Sloth with Zeal
- Anger with Meekness
- Greed with Detachment and Generosity
- Gluttony with Moderation
- Lust with Charity and Chastity

Strong feelings are not decisive for the morality or the holiness of persons; they are simply the inexhaustible reservoir of images and affections in which the moral life is expressed...

Emotions and feelings can be taken up in the virtues or perverted by the vices.
(CCC 1768)

Vice: habitual; immoral, wicked, or evil habit.

Virtue: habitual; moral, right, or good habit.

7 Deadly (or Capital) Sins: pride, greed, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia. They are called [deadly] because they engender other sins, other vices (CCC 1866).

Pride

All sin is pride. Pride is to say, “I don’t need God and His plan. I can do it on my own and my way.”

Pride is turning away from God, the Supreme Good, and turning toward a lesser good. All of sin means cutting yourself off from God.

God is the foundation of existence, happiness and peace. If you remove Him as the foundation, then you become the foundation. But you are not wise or strong enough – not big enough. That is why we feel overwhelmed - because you are trying to be the Atlas of the Universe. Then panic sets in, “I can’t deal with this!”

Then we try to soothe or escape the pressure, the weight, the pain with addiction to busyness, entertainment, food, alcohol, drugs, porn...

Pride is essentially competition. C.S. Lewis says:

Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man. We say people are proud of being rich, or clever, or good-looking, but they are not. They are proud of being richer, or cleverer, or better-looking than others.

Humility

Conquer pride with humility.

If pride is to say “I don’t need God and his plan. I can do it my way and on my own.” Then humility is to say: “I need God (by prayer and sacraments) and I need to live according to His plan, His design, His moral law. I need to live according to the way God designed me and the world to work!”

Vanity

Vanity, an extension of pride, **is the disordered concern for self-image.** It’s the vice of caring too much about what other people think.

We are tempted to give more energy to being liked or esteemed by colleagues or competitors or strangers or posting on social media – instead of putting real effort into talking and listening to our spouse or our kids, or elderly parents or getting a coffee with a friend.

Praise

Conquer vanity with desiring humility and rightly directed praise.

Praise should be directed to some excellence –

- It's natural for us to praise or esteem excellent things and excellent people, but to receive praise just for the sake of praise is completely empty.

It is not praise that we should seek.

- We should strive to become excellent humans - people who are virtuous and excel in their duties and responsibilities.
 - We should strive for what is honorable rather than honor. Then, if we are praised, then we say, "Thank you" and thank God.

That's why Aquinas says:

The truly virtuous person – the magnanimous person – doesn't care about doing what will get praised but about doing what is *praiseworthy*.

Aquinas lists three kinds of praise you should be especially on guard against:

1. Praise that's **false** – praise that is not based on some truth or personal excellence
2. Praise that's based on something **petty** - like your appearance, your paycheck or how many followers you have on social media
3. Praise that's **not going to promote some further good**

So what kind of praise does promote a further good? When the praise or compliment:

Promotes God's glory (If you've somehow helped people get closer to God.)

Edifies/encourages your neighbor (For example, if somebody says, "After listening to you, I'm going to really resolve to do better in this area," you can rejoice in that.)

Promotes your own striving for virtue (For example, if someone says, "I'm really impressed at how you've gotten better at not gossiping," you can be grateful for that praise and use it to strengthen your resolve.)

So, praise isn't bad; attention isn't bad. It just has to be directed to the right things.

The only praise that *ultimately* matters is praise from God. C.S. Lewis points out that receiving affirmation is a natural desire, but it's most fulfilling when it comes from someone who knows us or someone in a position of authority over us.

That's why only praise from God will be perfectly fulfilling. Only when we hear God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt 25:23), will we rejoice fully in who we are and in what our lives have been. So focus on what God, the saints, the angels and those closest to you think of you – not the masses.

Envy

Envy comes after pride because in order for me to gain, someone must lose.

Envy is sorrow or sadness at another's good or pleasure at another's misfortune.

1. Envy is sadness at someone else's good.
 - a. You lament when something goes well for some other person.
 - b. If the success or blessings of your friend, family member, neighbor, or even competitor displeases you, it is clear you suffer to some degree from envy.
2. Envy is pleasure at someone else's misfortune.

We celebrate when something bad happens to another person. Now, we don't do this explicitly. So how do you know when we've fallen into this? Well, we go around and tell everybody. We say, "Oh it's so awful, have you heard..." If it is so awful, then why do we get this sinister pleasure out of spreading it? We tear others down to raise ourselves up with an eagerness to spread the word of another's downfall; that's why we love dirty laundry.

Gossip is a form of envy. Gossip is unjustly speaking ill of others.

The best indicator for envy is gossip. So, if you gossip, then you certainly suffer from envy, especially if we gossip about people who are in the same line of work or similar situation. Our satisfaction comes from other people not doing well compared to how we're doing.

Gossip can be a violation of justice, *even if* what you are saying is true, i.e. to speak truths without legitimate cause.

Aquinas says this can be mortal sin

- If done knowingly and willingly because it is a grave matter.
- How is gossip a grave matter?
- Because it is mortal sin to kill someone unjustly and one's reputation is almost as valuable as their life – so to kill a person's reputation is like committing murder.

St. Francis de Sales in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* Ch 29:

Slander or Gossip is a kind of murder, for we have three lives: the spiritual, which consists in the grace of God; the physical, which depend upon the soul; and the social, which consists in our good name. Sin deprives us of the first, death takes away the second, and slander robs us of the third. The slanderer, by one blow of his tongue, commits three murders. He kills not only his own soul, and the soul of him that hears him, but also, by a spiritual murder, takes away the social life of the person slandered.

Gossip is a kind of terrorism because terrorism is indiscriminate –

- Gossip has such collateral damage that there is no way of knowing where it will end or who will be harmed.

Goodwill

Conquer envy and gossip with goodwill.

C.S. Lewis wrote, God “wants to bring the man to a state of mind in which he could design the best cathedral in the world, and know it to be the best, and rejoice in the fact, without being any more (or less) or otherwise glad at having done it than he would be if it had been done by another.”

Want good for others: even competitors, even enemies.

Think good of others: give them the benefit of the doubt, make excuses for them.

Speak well of others: every person has the right to a good reputation.

Anger

Anger is one of the God given passions or emotions. It is a source of energy and power to

1. Achieve something difficult or arduous.
2. Change what is bad or evil.
3. Endure something unchangeable without becoming evil oneself, or without despairing, giving up and losing hope.
4. The power of anger is the power of resistance in the soul.

We can judge whether our anger is righteous or sinful by looking through this checklist.

1. Is this anger in proportion to the bad thing that needs to be changed or to the offense or injustice that should be corrected; am I being too angry about this; am I overreacting?
2. Is this something for which I have responsibility or some control or is this something completely outside of my realm of authority and control? If there is nothing I should or can do to change it, then it is useless to waste the emotional energy or power on

this this thing; it is counterproductive and actually destructive for my emotional and physical health.

3. Finally, am I going to use this anger to bring about the good, to eliminate an evil or just cause further damage?

Meekness

Conquer anger with meekness.

Meekness is the virtue, the calm strength, that harnesses the power of anger and uses it for good. Meekness is not weakness.

The Greek word “praus” (prah-oos) was used to define a horse trained for battle.

Wild stallions were brought down from the mountains and broken for riding. Some were used to pull wagons, some were raced, and the best were trained for warfare. They retained their fierce spirit, courage, and power, but were disciplined to respond to the slightest nudge or pressure of the rider’s leg. They could gallop into battle at 35 miles per hour and come to a sliding stop at a word. They were not frightened by arrows, spears, or torches. Later in history these horses charged into the face of exploding cannons as Lord Tennyson expressed in his poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade.”

The war horse had ‘power under authority,’ ‘strength under control.’ A war horse never ceased to be determined, strong and passionate. However, it learned to bring its nature under the discipline of its rider. It gave up being out of control and rebellious.

Harness the power of anger by: Check and Command

Check the anger.

When the emotion of anger begins to rage

- Check it, like a hockey player checking an opponent into the boards.
- Check the anger that is getting out of control – Stop it.

Command the right response.

When you face something which causes anger

1. Stop and think before you react.
 - a. Ask yourself, what do I really want in the end? A wake of destruction, to burn relationships and bridges, vengeance, just to look like an idiot who is out of control. No. What I want in the end is union with God and to do His will. Keep that in the front of your mind.
 - b. Then think: What can I do in this situation?

2. If there is something you can or should do, then Act. Do what you can. Change what is possible.
3. If this thing is not your responsibility or there it is beyond your control, then stay calm and stay out of it.

Sloth or Acedia

The **CCC (1023)** and **1 John 3:2** teach us that Heaven means primarily to *be like God* by grace and the practice of virtue.

God created every person for this high calling. The only way you won't reach it is if you don't want to and/or you refuse to do your part.

The deadly sin of sloth or acedia is to have an aversion to this high calling.

- A. Sloth is a sorrow or boredom with the spiritual life. It's being bored with the things of God which results in a spiritual apathy or complacency. This is when you don't like spiritual things like prayer, rooting out vice and practicing virtue and talking about God and ultimate things like heaven – basically of everything that matters most.
- B. It results in the effort to *escape* the invitation to become god-like through busyness, workaholism, entertainment, news, sports, drunkenness, drug use, pornography, etc.

From the writings of Joseph Pieper:

Acedia is a sadness or sorrow that lacks courage for the great things that are proper to the nature of the Christian. It is a kind of anxious vertigo that befalls the human individual when he becomes aware of the height to which God has raised him. One who is trapped in acedia has neither the courage nor the will to be as great as he really is. He would prefer to be less great in order thus to avoid the obligation of greatness.

There are two symptoms of sloth:

1. Busyness
2. Distraction otherwise known as idleness

Both are a kind of restlessness. When you are restless, it means you are not at peace with the state of your life, which is supposed to be an image of God destined for glory and to become a saint.

Magnanimity

Conquer sloth with magnanimity, generosity, diligence, and fortitude.

Two practical antidotes to sloth:

- A. Rest or stillness to refocus your perspective on the purpose of life – union with God and to become a saint.
 - a. Rest, silence and stillness to think about and remember the ultimate things: the purpose of life, union with God, that this life will end in death, this life is only a passageway to our true homeland, Heaven.
 - b. To recall the great love of Christ and God the Father for us and to think about His life presented in the Gospel.

- B. Detach – take a break from filling our pleasure of the senses of sight, sound, taste, scent and touch.
 - a. We are not spiritually hungry because we are stuffed to the gills with filling the desires of the body.
 - b. We need to fast from feeding the desires of the body to grow in our spiritual hunger.

Creating and living by a **Rule of Life** also helps to conquer sloth.

- It helps lazy people do what they should.
- It prevents busy people from doing what they should not.

Living a well ordered and balanced life is a great strategy to help oneself do what we should to reach our God given greatness and avoid those things that prevent us from reaching potential.

C.S. Lewis: “Put first things first and we get the second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things.”

Greed

Greed is a disordered love of getting and possessing.

Although this might involve mere money, it can also take the form of an excessive desire for position, knowledge, and other goods. It is the desire for happiness and security in things rather than in God. When we fail to trust that God will provide our daily bread, then we seek to grab all that we can and store it up for a rainy day.

We see greed manifested in:

1. Consumerism that replaces union with God as the goal of life with the getting and possessing of material goods.
2. An eagerness and carelessness in living beyond one's means.
3. A failure to tithe 10% to the Church and other charitable organizations.

Jesus tells us in Luke 12:22-24, 32-34:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor about your body, what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, (nor 401k), yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms; provide yourselves with purses that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Generosity

Conquer greed with simplicity, trust, generosity.

1. Time with God in adoration
2. Living more simply
3. Practice abandonment to God's providence – His guidance and care. If we do our best to fulfill our responsibilities, then God will provide.
4. Give generously – the widow's mite – out of your want rather than your abundance. Tithe 10%.

Gluttony

Gluttony refers to excessive eating and drinking. Gluttony also refers to eating, drinking, and drug use for the sake of pleasure or to escape the reality we find too hard, too painful, or too boring.

Gluttony as overindulgence in food:

It's possible to sin by eating too much

1. because it's unhealthy.
2. because someone else is entitled to the food.
3. because you're eating to relieve stress.

Someone can also be gluttonous by being too picky, too attached to a certain kind of food, too health minded, or controlled by food.

C.S. Lewis points out, every time a person is grumpy, impatient, uncharitable, or self-concerned because of their stomach, it's a case of gluttony.

Conquer gluttony with temperance and moderation.

Fasting is a practical action to conquer gluttony:

- Fasting uses the intellect and will to control our desires.
- This trains the desires in all areas to be subject to the intellect and will.
- This helps to heal the wound of original sin.

“That we may become the free good person in full possession of himself.” ~ Pieper

Drunkenness.

Alcohol is not evil. Sirach 31:27 Wine is life for man if drunk in moderation. What is life worth without wine? It was created to make men happy. Drunk at the right time and the right amount, wine makes for a glad heart and a cheerful mind.

When we drink too much:

- We diminish the ability of the intellect and will to guide the passions.
- We lower ourselves to the level of an animal.
- We destroy the good of friendship because we say stupid or hurtful things.
- It diminishes our ability to relate in reality to one another, which is necessary for true friendship.

Moderation

Moderation is “the balanced use of what is naturally agreeable, whether to the body or spirit. It is the conscious control of one’s desires in order to use some human power to the best advantage of oneself or someone else” (Catholic Dictionary).

Lust

Sexual love is meant to be a total, permanent and faithful gift of self. Lust reduces that to selfish taking instead of generous giving.

Lust is to use another person sexually to get what you want.

Men use women for Physical gratification.

Men use their wives in sex.

Men use women in pornography.

Men use women with the 2nd look.

Women use men to get what they want.

What does a woman want most?

- To be wanted, cherished, protected, and loved.

Women give sex to get love. They are afraid that if they can't give sex, then they won't be loved.

Chastity

Chastity is the virtue that conquers lust.

Chaste is the heart that loves without looking for reward. Love is a gift of self to do what is good for the other. *Ti voglio bene*. I want your good. Rather than I want you for my pleasure.

For men this means:

- Give your wives proper physical affection that is not a lead into sex.
- Sit on the couch for 30 minutes each day and hold hands.
- Proximity leads to intimacy.
- No Porn
- No 2nd look

For women:

Women have a strong desire to be wanted, desired, cherished...

There is nothing wrong with this, but the real question is: desired how, and by whom?

1. By God, as a beautiful, infinitely valued person?
2. By a loving, respectful man?
3. Or by anyone who likes your body?

Know that God delights in you. Men and women are cherished children of God.

How to Identify One's Predominate Fault

It is likely that you see yourself in all seven of these vices or deadly sins. While we may fall into all of these at times, the great spiritual masters tell us that we all are dominated by one or two of these deadly sins. Since it is impossible to battle on all fronts all the time, we would be better served to eliminate the deadly sin that predominates. Here is a method to identify and eliminate one's predominant fault:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit in prayer to show you your greatest weakness.
2. Make a daily examination of conscience to see which of the deadly sins you fall into habitually.
 - a. Seek wise counsel from someone who knows you well and can be honest.
 - b. Seek the mercy and grace to come through the sacrament of reconciliation to overcome your predominant sin.
3. Make a firm resolution to practice the opposite virtue repeatedly.

Resources:

Toolbox 1: Summary of Virtues

Toolbox 3: Vices and Virtues Chart