

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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SUMMER REFLECTIONS

Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P.

Our readers can imagine the preparation required for each issue of *Light and Life*. The Post Office has deadlines we must meet if the newsletter is to be delivered "on time," and we must allow our printers adequate time to do their work. As a result, the Rosary Center staff works in a perpetual "as if" atmosphere; we presently enjoy the long days of summer, yet look ahead to October's feast of Our Lady of the Rosary – and even further ahead, to November's prayers for the faithful departed.

A similar "as if" attitude characterizes our lives as Christian citizens. In our everyday lives, we pay "taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). At the same time, we find ourselves, like the patriarch Abraham, who "looked forward to the city...whose builder and maker is God...a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:10-13). We face a challenge to be fully engaged in the present, yet to look forward, "as if" we were already enjoying the life in heaven Jesus has promised.

These thoughts come to mind because Fr. Duffner recently suggested I use this issue of *Light and Life* to mention the upcoming elections, and urge our readers to vote. As I write these words in July, between the feast of St. Mary Magdalene and her sister, Martha, November seems a world away. But in preparation for November and its civic responsibilities, I yesterday paid a visit to the post office, where I filled out a voter registration card – an errand necessitated by my recently moving, at the request of my superiors, to a new address.

When I was growing up, the voting age was twenty-one, and I remember how eagerly I looked forward to my twenty-first birthday, which gave me the right to participate in the 1968 presidential election. Coincidentally, this was the year I entered the Dominican Order, so my novitiate classmates and I spent several



Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy

OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY

of our recreation periods debating the merits of different candidates and issues. In the intervening years I have never lost that initial enthusiasm for voting.

I realize not everyone shares my delight – or my faith – in this civic exercise. The group known as Priests for Life reports that less than 50% of self-identified Christians are registered to vote, and only half of those registered actually cast ballots. Once, when I served as pastor, parishioner-friends observed that a vote in a national election does very little – and, in any case, the candidates often offer a voter nothing more than the distasteful task of choosing the lesser of two evils. I cannot deny the logic of this remark, and I admit I have not always been pleased with the options offered in an election. Nevertheless, I cannot forget my father's remarking that those who take no part in the process have little right to complain of its outcome.

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Moral Virtues: IV TEMPERANCE

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

A POPULAR NOTION OF TEMPERANCE

The history of a “Temperance Movement” in the United States has conditioned us to think of Temperance in connection with moderating the use of alcohol, or encouraging citizens to forego its use altogether. While moderation regarding drink is certainly a part of the virtue of Temperance, it is far from the only part we must consider if we are to understand this virtue.

A THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION

Temperance concerns itself with the most basic human needs: the need for food and drink, which guarantee the survival of the individual, and the need to guarantee perpetuation of the human race, by means of sexual relations between men and women. Since each of these is connected with the sense of touch, and because each is pleasant, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that “...*temperance is about the pleasures of touch*” (ST 141.5). He adds that because taste and smell contribute to the pleasure we enjoy in food, and because appearance is one of the pleasures we enjoy in other people, Temperance concerns itself with taste, smell, and sight. Of these, St. Thomas identifies taste as the sense most closely resembling the sense of touch, therefore, he argues, Temperance is most concerned with the sense of taste.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Our sense of the word Temperance is intimately linked to our notion of quantity, “how much” of something we need or plan to use. Virtue concerns ordering the things of our life to their proper ends, which we understand by reason, so Temperance is the virtue by which we employ the pleasant things of creation only to the extent required by our needs. Our *Catechism* teaches

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. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion.... (1809).

A PATH BETWEEN EXTREMES

At first glance this might seem a recipe for a very dull life, but we must remember that the purpose of virtue is to make us good and to make our actions good. By exercising Temperance in our relations to food, drink, and sex, we embrace the mean between the extremes of harmful self-denial and the immoderate self-gratification that can prove equally harmful. Rather taking the pleasure

out of life, Temperance confers a calm control over the things that delight us most, enabling us to enjoy them fully because we enjoy them in their proper measure.

The *Catechism* continues, quoting St. Augustine,

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through Temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is Fortitude). It obeys only [God] (and this is Justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is Prudence) (Ibid.)

A PRIMARY VIRTUE

Temperance is considered a principle virtue because the things it governs are of such importance, either to the individual or to the common good. In our study of Prudence, Justice, and Fortitude, we have seen that each of the principle virtues allies or connects to itself a number of secondary virtues. The principal virtues are called “cardinal” virtues (from the Latin word *cardo*, “hinge”) because so many other virtues depend on them.

Temperance is less important than Fortitude and Justice because they direct our relations with others, for the common good of the whole society. Moreover, the virtues that command good acts enjoy superiority over the virtues that concern merely difficult acts. Justice is concerned with relations among individuals, for the common good, while Temperance concerns itself only with one individual, whose personal desires may be hard to control.

A PERSONAL VIRTUE

Temperance governs only one person's use of food, drink, and sex, so it is far less important than the theological virtues, which direct us to eternal life with God. Nevertheless, as any athlete, any patient recuperating from a serious illness, or any addict recovering from her or his addiction will attest, Temperance is absolutely essential if we are to derive the greatest pleasure from our lives in human society, and if we are to achieve our fullest, personal potential.

VICES OPPOSED TO TEMPERANCE

No one will be surprised to learn that theologians count Intemperance, which is a lack of moderation in using pleasant things, among the vices opposed to Temperance. Intemperance manifests itself in Lust, an excessive search for sexual pleasure. St. Thomas Aquinas remarks that the more necessary a thing is,

the more its enjoyment must be governed by the use of reason. Sexual activity is altogether essential if the human race is to continue, therefore the excess of Lust insults the gift of human sexuality and reduces an individual's participation in the life of reason.

As the principle virtues ally themselves with secondary virtues, so do the chief vices surround themselves with vicious allies. St. Thomas Aquinas identifies the following habits as the companions of Lust: thoughtlessness, inconstancy, rashness, self-love, hatred for God, abhorrence of a future world. We need not describe these habits in detail to perceive that each of them is a decision to prefer one's personal comfort, pleasure, or well-being to the love of God and the appropriate love of our neighbor that God directs us to manifest.

PARTICULAR VICES

Because Temperance governs our use of those things necessary for our own survival, we can immediately see how Gluttony and Drunkenness exceed the mean we ought to embrace in our use of food and drink. Gluttony's inordinate (unreasonable) desire for food renders it a dangerous habit; it becomes a serious sin if it blinds an individual by turning him away from the wholesome thoughts of God and everlasting life.

Drunkenness deprives one of the use of reason, so it represents a danger similar to that of Gluttony. One difference between the two habits is the possibility that Drunkenness can occur through one's ignorance of what he is drinking.

Equally opposed to Temperance, however, is what theologians call Insensibility, the denial of the goodness in pleasant things, to the extent that an individual rejects what is essential to his health. We must always remember that virtue seeks the middle course between extreme. In the case of Temperance, the virtue strives to meditate between overuse of the good things that make human life pleasant and outright rejection of them.

ALLIED VIRTUES

The secondary virtues that accompany Temperance are Abstinence, which governs our use of food and drink, and Chastity, which directs our use of sex. These correspond to the actions by which we care for ourselves, and show proper respect for the conjugal acts by which the human race continues.

The very name of Abstinence denotes a wholesome turning away from the use of food. St. Peter wrote, "*Join with your faith virtue, and with virtue knowledge, and with knowledge abstinence*" (2 Peter 1:5,6). This combination suggests that refraining from the pleasure of food, at least occasionally, is one way by which we are able to turn away from excessive concern for ourselves.

FASTING: VIRTUE IN PRACTICE

We accomplish this by fasting, which is intended to turn our thoughts away from earthly worries, and focus them more clearly on the everlasting life that ought to

be our first concern. St. Thomas quotes St. Jerome, who observed, "*Venus is cold when Ceres and Bacchus are not there,*" a witty reminder that excess in food and drink can encourage temptations to similar excess in the sexual appetite.

As an interesting aside, we might note that St. Thomas suggests that individuals who wish to fast, should put off their noon meal until three o'clock in the afternoon. "*...this hour agrees with the mystery of Christ's Passion, which was brought to a close at the ninth hour...[and] those who fast by punishing their flesh, are conformed to the Passion of Christ....*" (ST II-II, 147.7).

IN PRAISE OF CHASTITY

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the name for the virtue of Chastity is derived from the word "chastise." Chastity chastises the will, teaching it to seek moderation in sexual behavior. Purity is a part of Chastity, moderating the pleasure we take from looking at or touching another person.

Priests and members of religious communities who take vows, promise to give up their use of some of life's legitimate pleasures. On the surface, such renunciation may resemble Insensibility, but we must take care to distinguish between Insensibility's scorn for what is pleasant and useful, and the commands of Chastity or Abstinence, by which an individual foregoes use of a legitimate good in an effort to keep her or his mind focused on another good. In an often-quoted passage from St. Paul, we read

The unmarried woman and the virgin think on the things of the Lord: that she may be holy in both body and in spirit. But she that is married thinks on the things of the world, how she may please her husband (1 Cor. 7:34).

THE VALUE OF CHOICE

The point we must make here is not that the choice of a celibate life is better than the decision to marry, but that the good things that accompany one choice preclude one's choosing the other.

Each choice is praiseworthy, and each must be governed by the virtue of Temperance. The person who marries must remain exclusively faithful to her or his spouse, and considerate of a spouse's desires. The person who chooses to renounce marriage must not hoard the time and resources that may accumulate as a result of this decision; rather the resources must be used profitably, for the common good. Temperance operates in individuals' lives regardless of the life choices the individual makes, and the virtue enables each of us to find a middle course between selfishness and insensitive denial.

THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

The Litany of Loreto praises the Blessed Mother for her prudence, chastity, and wisdom. The litany makes no mention of Mary's Temperance, but we must assume that this was among the virtues which adorned her life. We find one charming illustration of this Temperance in her actions during the Wedding at Cana.

When the host's supply of wine ran out, Mary was reasonably concerned to provide more. No one would ever suggest that Mary was advocating drunkenness. On the other hand, she realized very clearly that a certain amount of wine was necessary if the festivities were to continue. Her intervention resulted in what was undoubtedly just the proper amount of high-quality wine.

Her actions at Cana reflect Mary's concern for us, for she gave flesh to Jesus, whose Incarnation takes the watery "stuff" of our humanity and transforms it into something far more precious and delightful. ■

SUMMER

(continued from page 1)

More to the point, each of us has an obligation to contribute to the common good. Our *Catechism* reminds us,

It is the duty of citizens to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. The love and service of one's country follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity. Submission to legitimate authorities and service of the common good require citizens to fulfill their roles in the life of the political community. Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country (CCC, 2239-40).

If the word "submission" seems to detract from the active role we are called to embrace as citizens, consider the *Catechism's* words on the importance of following one's conscience.

The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. Refusing obedience to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (CCC, 2242).

This brings us back to the "as if" state that characterizes much of our life. We are surrounded, here and now, by thousands of pressing demands, including the obligation to vote. These may be tiresome, or even painful to attend to, but each time we respond, we grasp the opportunity to make the kingdom of this world resemble a little more the kingdom of heaven. St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that we are supported in this effort by the virtue of Hope, which strengthens us to see some future good as a goal that is possible – if difficult – to attain (ST, I-II, 40.1). In other words, to live now "as if" we were already enjoying a reward we look forward to.

OCTOBER: A MONTH OF POWER

By now our friends know that Dominicans take October seriously. It is the month in which we honor Mary as Queen of the Holy Rosary. The feast commemorates the naval battle in the Gulf of Corinth, on October 7, 1571, in which a multi-national Christian force triumphed over a much larger Moslem host.

A Dominican Pope, Pius V, helped assemble the Christian fleet, and he is said to have viewed the battle in a vision. Pope Pius attributed the victory to Mary's intercession and to the Christians' praying the Rosary throughout the night before the battle. The Christian and Moslem forces squared off in a relatively small space, and legend claims that the sound of the Christians' rhythmic praying unnerved their foes even before daybreak. The weather initially favored the Moslems, but as the sun rose, the wind shifted, and the Christians gained the upper hand.

In celebrating the feast of the Holy Rosary, the Church uses the anniversary of a bloody confrontation to remind us of the immense value of prayer. Lepanto is one more event in which we see Mary standing by Jesus, she exercising the remarkable intercessory power she has promised to put at our disposal, and Jesus fulfilling His promise to stand with the Church "...always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28:20).

G.K. Chesterton wrote a famous poem describing the Battle of Lepanto, and the Rosary Center is pleased to offer *LEPANTO* for \$10.95 plus postage & handling. (See postage rate chart below) For convenience you may order online at www.rosary-center.org

NOVEMBER: A MONTH OF MERCY

November begins with a joyous celebration paying tribute to all the Church's canonized saints. The feast traces its history to the year 609, when Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon in Rome as a church to honor the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs, especially those whose feast days might have been ignored, forgotten, or celebrated with less than due solemnity. The following day we pray for all those who have died and who are not named in the calendar of saints – in other words, "the rest of us."

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (the formal title for All Souls Day) invites us to rejoice in God's mercy, revealed in the Church's doctrine of Purgatory. Purgatory is not a second chance; it is the next-to-final step in a life-long journey that leads us to God. Throughout November we will offer Mass daily for our friends' relatives and friends who have died. Please join our prayer that they, and all the faithful departed, may rest in peace.

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