

THE ROSARY

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Voice of the Rosary Confraternity

LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER DISMAS SAYRE, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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"I must also pray, she said, for the conversion of sinners." We commonly think of Lourdes as a place of physical healing, and we cannot doubt that many individuals have been cured of serious illness through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes, and recourse to the water for which the spot is famed. However, St. Bernadette's recalling the Blessed Virgin's command to pray for sinners reminds us that Lourdes is also a place of spiritual healing. Each day confessors at Lourdes greet penitents in every imaginable language, offering the consolation that results from conversion.

God's hand is clearly at work in the physical healings that take place at Lourdes, but these healings are signs of a deeper spiritual reality: the spiritual conversion that occurs whenever we have access to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One spiritual writer has said that the illnesses the gospel presents are symptoms of a deeper illness that afflicts the world, as a result of sin. Our First Parents closed their eyes for a moment in the Garden, and we've suffered the effects of blindness ever since. Jesus' healings in the gospel – and the healings granted the faithful at Lourdes – are a reminder that when we unite ourselves to Christ, as we do when we surrender to Mary's call to conversion, we join Him in pushing back the Kingdom of Darkness and ushering in His Kingdom of Light.

We are nearly finished with our reflections on the Capital Sins – for which we may be profoundly grateful. These reminders of our weakness are distressing to consider. We must be grateful, then, for the Good News of Lourdes, which reminds us of the power of God's grace, and the role we play as ministers of that grace when we take Mary's words to heart and pray for the conversion of sinners.

NEITHER GONE NOR FORGOTTEN

This year our beloved Fr. Paul Duffner will celebrate his one hundred second birthday. This is a remarkable event, although Fr. Paul rather modestly dismisses it. The former director of the Dominicans' Rosary apostolate remains faithful to the ministry he loved and nurtured for more than two decades. Each day he makes his way (with assistance) to the Rosary



Silhouette by Sr. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

Center, where he continues to organize booklets and perform other small, but necessary tasks.

Fr. Reginald Martin, who followed Fr. Duffner, reports that he recently received the spiritual journal published by the Western Association of the Order of Malta, whose members he serves as a chaplain. "You may imagine," he said, "my delight to find a reflection on St. Joseph, written by none other than our Fr. Duffner."

Fr. Duffner wrote

[the] intimacy of Joseph with the Divine Word made flesh was not only one of physical closeness. With the growth of the divine gifts of faith and love with which Divine Providence prepared him for this exalted mission, there was an intimacy of soul, a silent contemplation that filled his heart with adoration and thanksgiving and wonder at the mysterious ways of God.

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in honor of

OUR LADY OF LOURDES

FEB. 3 - 11 — FEB. 12 - 20

TO BE OFFERED FOR YOUR INTENTIONS

THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

Capital Sins: VI

Gluttony

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

A CHANGE OF DIRECTION

In our last reflection we observed that two of the Church's early theologians, John Cassian and Gregory the Great, taught that the Capital Sins are either spiritual or physical. Among the former are pride, envy, and anger, and avarice, or greed. In this reflection we will begin a consideration of the two sins that demand the cooperation of – and therefore demean – our bodies, Gluttony and Lust.

Our *Catechism* defines sin as “an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is a failure in genuine love...caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods.” (CCC, No. 1849) The key word in this definition is the adjective “perverse.” To say we must eat and drink states no more than the obvious, which suggests that if Gluttony is a sin, it must demonstrate an immoderate attachment to “certain goods,” namely, food and drink.

GLUTTONY: A DEFINITION

The dictionary defines “perverse” as “directed away from what is right or good.” St. Thomas Aquinas does not employ the *Catechism's* vocabulary, but he teaches the same lesson when he states

Gluttony denotes, not any desire of eating or drinking, but an inordinate desire. Now desire is said to be inordinate through leaving the order of reason, wherein the good of moral value consists: and a thing is said to be a sin through being contrary to virtue. (ST, II-II, 148.1)

GLUTTONY: WHAT? WHEN?

Each of us has probably overeaten on occasion. Similarly, guests at wedding receptions or other special events may carelessly drink more than is wise. Indeed, St. Augustine asks, “Who is it, Lord, that does not eat a little more than necessary?” This occasional overindulgence should not be identified with Gluttony, because what renders indulgence sinful is not the amount of food or drink consumed, but rather our cultivating an unreasonable attitude toward these necessities.

St. Thomas remarks, “... it is a case of Gluttony only when a man knowingly exceeds the measure in eating from a desire for the pleasures of the palate.” (*Ibid.* reply ad 2) If we are to sin, we must deliberately choose to do something wrong, knowing that what we are doing is wrong. To accept a second – or third – piece of pie at a Thanksgiving dinner may be unwise (St. Thomas attributes this to “inexperience”) but this

is not the deliberate, cultivated, and repeated excess that characterizes Gluttony.

THE HABIT OF GLUTTONY

To cultivate a desire for more food than we need is sinful because to do so confuses a temporal, physical good with the eternal good – eternal life with God – that ought to underlie all our actions. St. Thomas wrote that Gluttony “is opposed to the precept of hallowing the Sabbath, which commands us to rest in our last end.” (ST, II-II, 148.2, reply ad 2)

AN EXAMPLE FROM SCRIPTURE

We might not immediately associate Gluttony with the Third Commandment, but consider the rich man in the gospel, at whose table Lazarus begged.

St. Luke tells us the man “was clothed in purple and fine linen and...feasted sumptuously every day.” (Lk 16:19) The man is condemned because the law says we shall enjoy a Sabbath's rest on one day of the week, and labor on the others. These days, what we wear to dinner on Sunday may be a matter of personal taste, but many of us still look forward to a better meal on that day than we enjoy the rest of the week. The rich man's sin is that he has turned every day into a Sabbath, not so he can enjoy – here and now – a sign of the eternal rest we look forward to in heaven, but so he can do nothing.

A REFLECTION FROM THE FATHERS

When he considers the sin of Gluttony, St. Gregory the Great employed the following adjectives and adverbs to characterize the glutton's attitude toward food: “hastily, sumptuously, too much, greedily, daintily.” St. Thomas reflected on these words and wrote

...Gluttony denotes inordinate concupiscence [desire] in eating. Now two things are to be considered in eating, namely the food we eat, and the eating thereof. Accordingly, the inordinate concupiscence may be considered in two ways. First, with regard to the food consumed: and thus...a man seeks *sumptuous* – *i.e.*, costly food; as regards its quality, he seeks food prepared too nicely – *i.e.*, *daintily*; and as regards quantity, he exceeds by eating *too much*.

Secondly, the inordinate concupiscence is considered as to the consumption of food: either because one forestalls the proper time of eating, which is to eat *hastily*, or one fails to observe the due manner of eating, by eating *greedily*. (ST, II-II, 148. 4)

Sensual happiness, such as the Rich Man in the parable enjoys, is not wrong because food is inherently bad, but

because we want too much of it, or because we will accept only the highest quality. Excellence and abundance – we might also call them quantity and quality – are attributes of heaven, because only God can satisfy our desire for everything good. Because we cannot expect complete abundance or absolute excellence in this life, St. Thomas concludes that sensual happiness is unreasonable.

TWO MODERN REFLECTIONS

Two modern writers draw the same conclusions. G.K. Chesterton observed that we can be gluttons by eating very little but at the same time being very picky about what we will eat. In C.S. Lewis' novel *The Screwtape Letters*, Screwtape (the Devil) urges his nephew, Wormwood, a novice demon, to consider the mother of the fellow they seek to bring to Hell. Her attitude toward food drives her servants and friends to distraction. She is guilty of Gluttony, the senior devil observes, but not the Gluttony of Excess; hers is the Gluttony of Delicacy. The woman is unaware that one can sin by demanding a very small amount of food, but insisting that it be prepared to perfection. (Letter 17)

The Devil is the Father of Lies, so we should not, perhaps, turn to him as our first resource when seeking the truth about Christian moral teaching. Nonetheless, in another of his letters Screwtape very eloquently summarizes the Church's teaching about sin. And we may find his words particularly apt if we consider them in relation to what we have discerned about Gluttony. Screwtape tells Wormwood

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures; all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which he has forbidden. (Letter 9)

GLUTTONY'S SAD EFFECTS

Anyone who has over-enjoyed a dinner by eating or drinking too much will testify to what St. Thomas identifies as the "dullness of mind," that can result in our acting "as though reason were fast asleep at the helm." This is a very poetic description, but we must not be misled; it describes the sad lack of moderation that can lead to unseemly conversation or the betrayal of confidences. These are among the intellectual consequences of Gluttony. When we consider the effects of Gluttony on the physical side of an individual's moral life, St. Thomas suggests Gluttony's immoderation can lead to improper sexual behavior. A glance at the advertisements in the health section of any newspaper will provide ample illustrations of the physical ills that may attend Gluttony.

THE REMEDY: TEMPERANCE

The history of a "Temperance Movement" in the United States may have conditioned us to think of Temperance

as 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 BASIC VIRTUE

Temperance concerns itself with the most basic human needs: the need for food and drink, which guarantee and safeguard our survival. Because food and drink are related to the sense of touch, and because each is pleasant, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that "... temperance is about the pleasures of touch" (*ST* 141.5). And he adds that because taste and smell contribute to our enjoyment of food, Temperance also 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.

Earlier in this reflection we considered the place of quantity as we make our decisions about food. Our sense of the word Temperance is intimately linked to our notion of "how much" of something we need or plan to use. The Church's teaching on virtue describes 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.... (CCC, No. 1809).

TEMPERANCE: HO-HUM? OR REASONABLE CONTROL?

At first glance this might seem a recipe for a very dull life, but we must remember that virtues are habits, and the purpose of any virtue is to make us good and to make our actions good. Exercising Temperance in our attitude toward food and drink enables us to embrace the middle course between the extremes of harmful self-denial and the immoderate self-gratification of Gluttony, which can prove equally harmful. Rather than 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. To draw our attention to the behaviors that will moderate our eating and drinking, St. Thomas turns to the Book of Ecclesiasticus, where the author states, "I thought in my heart to withdraw my flesh from wine, that I might turn my mind to wisdom." (Eccles. 2.3)

THE MODEL 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.

Early Church writers wrote quite fondly of the wedding at Cana. They saw it as a sign of what Jesus accomplished in the Incarnation, taking the watery "stuff" of our humanity and transforming it into something far more precious and delightful. Gluttony is an abuse of this generosity; our temperate enjoyment of the good things God has prepared for our nourishment is a sign of our willingness to follow the example of Jesus and his mother. ■

NEITHER GONE NOR FORGOTTEN (Page 1 continued)

He, whom Jesus obeyed on earth, still holds a marvelous power of intercession over the Heart of Jesus in heaven. He who watched over the Holy Family in Nazareth, now from heaven watches over Christian families who in faith and trust seek his assistance.

Mary invites our prayers in a special way during February, when we celebrate her memory as Our Lady of Lourdes. Her cherished spouse extends the same invitation a month later, when we celebrate his feast on March 19th.

BOOKS OLD AND NEW

Fr. Dwight Longenecker asks, "Are you disturbed by the state of our world?" Most of us will answer affirmatively, and news broadcasts fuel this dread. We see, hear and read the horrors of terrorism and war, crime, corruption, rage, violence, inequality, poverty, and attacks on human dignity at every level.

We are at war with evil; it's real, and it's personal. But we are not without assistance. *Praying the Rosary for Spiritual Warfare* is a champion to fight beside us, and this book teaches us to pray the Rosary in an entirely new way, battling with Mary as we pray the 20 mysteries.

Each mystery is aligned with a particular evil, helping us focus on ills from abortion, murder, and genocide, to materialism, disease, pollution, corruption, and abuse of the poor. Through Scripture, reflection, and ten positive goals to pray for in each of the mysteries, Fr. Longenecker provides a vision for how these demonic evils can be trampled down through prayer and action.

With *Praying the Rosary for Spiritual Warfare*, we answer St. Paul's battle cry: "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the cunning schemes of the devil."

The Rosary, A Coloring Book for Prayer and Contemplation

Thought you were too old for a coloring book? Think again. Coloring books open a path to beauty, and can lead to an experience of contemplative prayer. Pray the Rosary as you color. Let your mind focus on the mysteries as you create a unique visual prayer.

RETURNING TITLES

The Rosary, "The Little Summa" by Robert Feeney

This fourth edition of a popular text has new material, including a chapter, "John Paul II: The Rosary, My Favorite Prayer." One readily understands why the Pope identified the Rosary as his "favorite prayer." Other Christians have made the same judgement. In fact, the very word "Rosary" provides a clue to its popularity. The word means, "A Garden of Roses," and the experience of praying the Rosary may be compared to a spiritual sojourn in a rose-garden. Over the centuries millions have found delight and wisdom in using it for prayer.

The book provides meditations on the 20 mysteries of the Rosary, and includes a compendium of papal teachings on the Rosary, and of Our Lady's call for the Rosary in her apparitions

The Rosary: John Paul II Method by Robert Feeney

This paperback book captures Saint John Paul II's vision of the Rosary as a contemplative prayer, and explains how the Rosary can lead to a springtime of the human spirit. Praying the Rosary following the method developed by John Paul II will help readers deepen their meditation and nourish a deeper spiritual life and quest for personal holiness.

The book shows how the Rosary is a powerful spiritual weapon in the battle against evil, and how praying the Rosary can help bring about a new Pentecost.

AN APPEAL TO OUR POSTAL PALS

Although the Post Office has reduced the postage for letters, the cost for mailing packages continues to increase. The Rosary Center sent more than 17,000 rosaries to our missionary friends in 2016, and more than 15,000 of these rosaries went to overseas addresses.

We depend upon you, our friends and benefactors for everything we do, and distributing rosaries to those longing to hear our Blessed Mother's Good News is an essential part of our ministry. We beg you to join us in this apostolate by making a special gift to our Postal Pal program. You will never know whom your kindness touches, but those who receive our rosaries will never forget you.

