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on Our Lady

-I would like to devote this chapter talk to the Blessed Virgin Mary, because it was from her that I got the courage to accept the invitation to dance with divine Providence. What I mean is that in union with Our Lady, I accepted the appointment of superior ad nutum (temporary superior) of Our Lady of the Philippines with an act of faith & humility. I did echo her words, "Behold be it done to me according to your word."

-I believe that God does not command impossible things. If he commands something which seems difficult, it is that we may ask for help, and He will help us so that we may be able to do it. With this in mind I put all my trust in Him.

-Now I feel like dancing with Divine Providence. Fr. Charles Cummings in his e-mail to me remarks: "Not a bad partner, but unpredictable One." I do have some apprehensions because I do not know what kind of dance is this. I might step on His toes, or my back might be broken by too much twisting! However, in one of my talks with Fr. Cyprian, he said, "It's really not that all crucifixion, there will always be some consolations." I was very much encouraged by these words, and also of the support of the community of Ava inspite of the scarcity of our number.

-The more I realized that I am truly loved, the more I felt the inner freedom to come here in peace & to let all inner debate about what will happen next subside. The peace and joy that comes from having to endure something for the love of God, no matter how little & trivial it might be, is indeed in comparable and is always beyond any human articulation.

-"Behold be it done to me according to your word." In the great fiat of Our Lady, the strength & foundation of our life of contemplation is grounded, for it means absolute trust in God, trust which will not set us free from suffering but will set us free from anxiety, hesitation, & above all from the fear of suffering. Trust which makes us willing to be what God wants us to be, however great or however little that may prove. Trust which accepts God as illimitable love.

-"Behold be it done to me according to your word." This is the moment when we celebrate the wedding of the Holy Spirit with humanity, the wedding of the Spirit of wisdom & love with the dust of the earth. It is in Our Lady that God fell in love with humanity. Our Lady said yes for the human race. Each one of us needs to echo that yes for our own lives.

-We are all asked if we will surrender what we are, our humanity, our flesh & blood, to the Holy Spirit and allow Christ to fill the emptiness formed by the particular shape of our life. We shall not be asked to do more than the Mother of God; we shall not be asked to become extraordinary or set apart or to make a hard & fast rule of life or to compile a manual of mortifications or heroic resolutions.

-What we shall be asked to give is our flesh & blood (the two coins which the poor widow gave, our body & soul). We shall be asked to give our daily life, our thoughts, our service to one another, our affections & loves, our words, our intellect, our waking, working, & sleeping, our ordinary human joys & sorrows, to God. Every trifling thing & every great sorrow is told to her; she is the sharer of all earth's joys & griefs.

-To surrender all that we are, as we are, to the spirit of Love in order that our lives may bear Christ into the world, that is what we shall be asked. Our Lady has made this possible. Her fiat was for herself & for us, but if we want God's will to be completed in us as it is in her, we need to echo her fiat, "Behold be it done to me according to your word."

-In giving her humanity to God, Mary gave all humanity to Him, to be used for His own will; to use it as instruments for righteousness. In wedding her littleness to the Spirit of Love, she wed all lowliness to the Spirit of Love. "Blessed are the lowly for they shall be exalted."

-In surrendering to the Spirit and become the Bride of Life, she wed God to the human race and made the whole world pregnant with the life of Christ.

-Our Lady knew in what the joy of the world was to consist, what it would be that would make everyone call her blessed, for it would simply be her own joy. Everyone who wished it could be wed to the Spirit: not only monks/nuns but everyone in the world; not only young girls & boys or children who had been somehow spared from sin, but sinners too; not only the young but also the old, because the Spirit makes everything new.

-Marriage, which seems to us to be such a wonderful consummation of love, is only a faint shadow, a kind of symbol, of the wedding of the Spirit of God with humanity; and it is from that wedding that Christ is born into the world.

-The union with the Holy Spirit means that the Spirit infuses His qualities into us. He sows us with wonderful seed, His gifts & fruits. Christ is born into the world in lives that have received those qualities.

-Mary, the all-holy ever virgin Mother of God, is the masterwork of the mission of the son and Spirit in the fullness of time. For the first time in the plan of salvation and because His Spirit had prepared her, the Father found the *dwelling place* where His Son and His Spirit could dwell among us.

-The Holy Spirit prepared Mary by His grace. It was fitting that the mother of Him in whom "the whole deity dwells bodily" should herself be "full of grace." In Mary, the Holy Spirit *manifests* the Son of the Father, now become the Son of the Virgin. She is the burning bush of the definitive theophany. Filled with the Holy Spirit she makes the Word visible in the humility of His flesh.

-The Father bending down to this lovely creature, so unaware of her own beauty, chose her to be the mother of His Son in time of whom He is the Father in eternity. At the end of this mission of the Holy Spirit, Mary became the Woman, the new Eve ("mother of the living"), the mother of the "whole Christ."

-The Fathers of the Church see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of the salvation of the human race through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching: "the knot of Eve's disobedient was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."

-Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her "Mother of the living," and frequently claim: "death through Eve, life through Mary."

-In the public life of Our Lord Mary appears prominently; at the very beginning when at the marriage feast in Cana, moved with pity, she brought about by her intercession the beginnings of the miracles of Christ. Finally, she was given by Our Lord dying on the cross as a mother to his disciple, with these words: "Woman, behold thy Son." Christ never ceases to give His Mother to us.

-The Mother of God who remains the ideal type, the absolutely perfect exemplar of the faithful soul who is ever docile to the Holy Spirit, never had an ecstasy. She passed unnoticed among the women of Nazareth and, nevertheless, the smallest actions, the slightest look of the Blessed Virgin Mary was of more value in the co-redemption than the combined sufferings of all the martyrs and even all the merits of the Church Militant up to the end of time.

-It is true to say that no one has penetrated the mystery of Christ in all its depths than Our Lady. St. John the Evangelist & St. Mary Magdalene did see very far

into this mystery and St. Paul often speaks of the "knowledge" he had received of it, yet all the saints dwell in shadow compared with Our Lady's light! The secret she kept and pondered in her heart is unspeakable; no tongue can tell it, no pen can express it (St. Elizabeth of the Blessed Trinity).

-The more we honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, the more we honor Jesus Christ, because we honor Mary only that we may the more perfectly honor Jesus, since we go to her only as the way by which we are to find the end we are seeking, which is Our Lord Jesus (St. Louis De Monfort).

-It stands to reason that if we surrender our will to God's will, we will make our lives the echo of Our Lady's prayer, "Behold be it done to me according to your word," that is to say, may Christ live in me the life He wants to live in me, where, with whom, and how He wants to live it.

*** Mary ***

-From the beginning of salvation history God had ceaselessly engaged patriarchs, kings, prophets, and all manner of insignificant people like ourselves to collaborate with him in mankind's salvation. Above all "in the fullness of time," he involved a whole cast of characters in the drama of redemption – from John the Baptist, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, the Magi, the shepherd, and Joseph, to the apostles and disciples and holy women of his entourage. Each of these had a special and irreplaceable part to play in helping to communicate God's grace to man.

-God, it would appear from Sacred Scripture, chose to redeem us, not out of a radical divine solitariness, but by involving many persons as collaborators with his divine purpose. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated when John the Baptist objects out of humility and a recognition of Who the Lord Jesus is to the Lord Jesus' own request that John baptize Him: "John would have prevented Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'" But to this perfectly logical theological objection The Lord Jesus responds paradoxically: "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Does not this emphatic *for us to realize that in* the whole divine and human synergy God envisioned for our redemption – that sinners should cooperate in their own process of being redeemed?

-If God, that is, chose to redeem us by appointing many collaborators in his mission – what shall we say of the Mother, the obedient Virgin full of grace made by God in his providence to be the sheer and perfect ground out of which would grow the flower of our redemption, the fruit that would nourish us unto life everlasting? Shall we say that she was an "instrument" or "means" momentarily needed to carry out an ulterior divine design but left behind after she had served her function?

-The Blessed Virgin Mary held a very important place in Cistercian spirituality. The Order placed itself under her patronage from its beginning, and dedicated all its churches to her. The Cistercian writers of the 12th century sang of the Holy Mother of God with a filial piety matched only by the theological exactitude of their language. St. Bernard, supreme among all the others, merited the title "Litanist of Mary."

-In the mystery of the Virgin Mary, Cistercian monks have recognized certain traits peculiar to their way of life. From the beginning they have felt drawn to her as to a source of life and example.

-When we try to speak of the role of Cistercian monks in the Church the image of the Virgin Mary comes irresistibly to mind.

“According to your word”

-Mary was so receptive to the Word of God that she conceived him in her womb and gave Him birth here in our midst. We have seen the importance for the monk of listening to this word and welcoming it. This welcome is the key to his existence.

A heart pregnant with the Word

-“A heart pregnant with the Word” is the expression applied by Blessed Gueric of Igny to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the monk. He sees the monk as conceiving the word in his heart by prolonged contact with the word. For nine months the Word of God slowly matured in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

-As God once leaned down with infinite tenderness to the Virgin Mary, so today he leans down with the same love to those hearts in which the word is on the point of bearing fruit. These are the hearts in which the word is sown and grows. Those hearts are filled with the desire of God and even now his infinite love waits patiently for them.

-The word which the monk receives is not destined just for himself. Not that he must necessarily speak it to others. If the word remains deep in his own heart, it is, so that taking root there it will give rise to new life. And that life is the beginning of the new world which will be reborn when the figure of this world will have passed away.

-Like the Virgin Mary, the monk makes his heart and his body ready for it. He is entirely given up to waiting and listening. He looks forward to it in hope, knowing that his vocation is to nurture the seed of life.

-As a mother watches over the fruit she carries in her womb near her heart, so the monk nurtures the word in his heart. Little by little, the life of God takes possession of him. Expressed in him inwardly by God it seeks to express itself outwardly, in his body, in his psyche, in his very attitude. This work is not done without pain. It hurts in his very depths and even lacerates his body. The rebirth in the spirit cannot take place without the pain of childbirth, without a strange mixture of suffering and joy.

-Sometimes there is suffering caused by the weight of the new life which presses heavily upon us as we struggle towards the perfection to which we are called. It

is the pain, if pain it be, of the bud which opens under the pressure of the life it contains.

The prophetic word

-“Let it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). When the Virgin Mary uttered these words, she gave herself up completely to the creative power of the Word of God. In that power she conceived the Word in her womb, and brought Him forth as her Son. She also received the power to proclaim the Word in a new and up to then unknown way. She did this in her Magnificat and so she became a prophet.

-Mary belongs to both Old and New Testaments, and as such she is a prophet. She shows a sensitivity and announces a new meaning which belong to the new age – that age which the Spirit has come to inaugurate in her person.

-The words which the monk receives in order to share them with others have this same quality. The monk too lives on the frontier between two epochs in the history of salvation. Not that he stands between the Old and the New, but between the time of the Church and that of the world to come. The monk is rooted in the former, and already has a foretaste and even almost a vision of the latter in his heart.

-Like the Virgin Mary, the monk is an intermediary figure, standing on the threshold between time and eternity. He is both passing by and waiting. The old world is still there and the monk belongs to it. But the new world has begun to break through, at least momentarily and in brief flashes. Without understanding it clearly the monk has received a sort of illumination of it.

-On his lips, as on those of the Virgin Mary, the words of the psalms have a new taste, the taste of the world to come. In this sense the monk too is a prophet. His life is a prophetic sign at the heart of the world. The life of the monk is an image of what we await in eternal life.

Spouse of the Word

-In the Virgin Mary the love of God for His creatures reaches its apogee and fulfillment – the fullness of beauty and of love. The Virgin Mary is the fullness of all beauty and of love. She alone is already the plenitude of the Church. She is the Bride of the Word and His eternal joy.

-She is the joy of God, who through her has assumed all humanity into the Incarnate Word, come to inaugurate the new temple, in the heart of the Trinity, where praise and thanksgiving will be forever sung.

-This heavenly liturgy is even now shared in by the liturgical assembly of the Church. In every liturgy "a door is opened in heaven" (Rev. 4:1), which enables us to see some reflection of the beauty and love which are in God.

-The monk is present to this every day and night. The door is open not only in the community of his brethren gathered for worship but also in his own heart. St. Isaac of Syria says: "Enter into your own heart and find the door that opens on Paradise."

-The monk has received everything from God, even that beauty which increases in him daily and gradually transforms him into the likeness of Christ. Over the long years of monastic life he has grown old. Yet he remains ever young, with unquenchable hope and with wonder at the goodness and kindness of God. His eyes are the eyes of a child who never ceases to marvel at the mighty deeds of God.

-He is considered as a good and beautiful old man. Is there any achievement greater or more splendid than this, that a man, humble and unaware, should reflect the goodness and the beauty of God?

-The Blessed Virgin Mary did not fully understand the message of the angel. She has no doubts whether it will happen, but how it will happen. She opens herself to where the message will lead her. She was not afraid to take the responsibility to be the mother of God although she did not understand the full implication of this.

-Mary is the first disciple to receive the Word both in her body and soul. She was already pregnant with the Word of God in her heart before she conceives Him in her womb.

-The contemplatives are constantly covering the world with their co-redeeming prayer. This is what our Lady did in the cenacle. While the first apostles went forth to labor and to die, Mary, silent in prayer, accompanied them to all their battles for Christ.

-Mary is the first living tabernacle where the Father enclosed His Son. Her Immaculate Heart is the monstrance which held Him. Her lap and arms were the first altar and the first throne on which the Son of God made man was worshiped. There the angels, the shepherds and the wise men adored Him.

-"Christ became man by the Virgin so that the disobedience which proceeds from the serpent might be destroyed in the same way as it originated. For Eve,

being a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death. The Virgin Mary, however, having received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced to her the good tidings...answered: "Be it done to me according to thy word" (St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 100, 5).

-If we want to get to know the Son, we must look at the heart of the Mother. In Jesus as in any other Son we see the plain evidence of maternal influence; that is why we shall go on to contemplate the sweetest heart of the Virgin, His most Holy Mother.

-Motherhood and filiation are two congruent terms, and congruent terms usually have concurrence. Thus, Christ was predestined from all eternity as the son of God and head of all humankind by the same decree by which Mary was predestined to become His Mother. Thus, Mary is inseparably united to God; before the Incarnation, the Messianic hope and expectation; in the Incarnation, in the faith of the Word Incarnate, her son; after the Incarnation, in love and union with Jesus Christ in the universal redemption of the human race.

-When through the spiritual motherhood of Mary we acquired divine filiation in Christ we actually participated in her own nature.

-Just as any small child go to his mother, so do we go to our Mother in Heaven, like children, we look for protection and refuge to her. Love for the Virgin Mary is the shortest and safest way to go to Christ. How easy it is to love the Son if we contemplate the heart of His Mother!

-As Jesus came to us through Mary, we go to Jesus through Mary. As Mary mothered His physical body, she also mothers all the members of His Mystical Body. Both Mary and the Church is the spiritual mother of Christian souls, enabling them ever more pleasing to God.

-Little by little Mary forms us; little by little she brings us more to Jesus so that we become more and more like her elder son, our brother. Mary's love is continually directed toward the glory of Christ and the Father through the fulfillment of God's will in perfect souls.

-Matthew Kelly, in his book "Rediscover Catholicism, has this to say: "Do Catholics worship Mary and the saints? No. We pray to them but not to worship them, and not in the same way we pray to God. Think of it in this way: if you got sick and asked me to pray for you, I would. This does not make me uniquely Catholic or even unique Christian.

-“There are many non-Christians who believe in the power of prayer. If I ask my non-Catholic friends whether they pray for their spouse or their children, they will say yes.

-“If I ask them to pray for me, they will say yes. This is the same principle. We believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints are dead to this world, but we also believe they live on in the next world. And we believe that their prayers are just as powerful – even more powerful. We are essentially saying to them, “We have problems down here. You know what is like because you have been here; pray for us”!

-Mary is the most famous woman in history. She leads all prominent women who have earned their fame by living a life of virtue such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She has inspired more art and music than any other woman in history, and even in modern age, she fascinates the imaginations of men and women, of all faiths. In our age, Mary appeared on the cover of Time Magazine more often than any other person.

-But beyond her fame and her historical importance is her centrality to Christian life. The first Christians gathered around her for comfort and guidance, yet some modern Catholics treat her like she has contagious disease. One of the great challenges that we face as modern Catholics is to find genuine place for Mary in our spirituality, like Pope John Paul II did.

-A mother has a unique perspective. Nobody sees the life of a child the way the child's mother does – not even the Father. This is Mary's perspective of her Son Jesus' life. Every genuine Christian, not just Catholics, should be interested in this perspective – and not just interested, but fascinated.

-Our love for Our Lord Jesus cannot and must not ever be separated from our love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, for we cannot please the Lord Jesus if we do not also love His and our Mother. Nor will our love reach God in true perfection unless it is made to pass through the love of Mary, the one and only creature who has ever loved God here below in the way He wishes to be loved and ought to be loved.

-In discussion on spiritual motherhood and spiritual filiation, what we hear seems to be about motherhood and a filiation somehow distant from that relationship in human life, as if it were so different that it did not concern us. And this is because we are still concerned with the flesh. The flesh is real, but the Spirit is more real.

-She teaches with her heroic life, with her self-sacrificing heart which keeps her sons in mind always. Mothers show with their eyes, and make us feel in their caresses, the maternal warmth of their arms.

-The mediation of Mary is an intervention, whereas that of the Lord Jesus is immolation. Mary is an advocate who intercedes; Christ is the Mediator who pays. But the intervention of Mary, even as an advocate, is a force; a power for us, because she excels in lifting us.

-As the supreme glorifier of the Most Blessed Trinity, how proud we should be to have the Most Holy Mother of God to be also as our mother!

-One can very well object that Mary followed the Passion of her Son at a distance, if you measure love in yards and feet. But when two hearts are inextricably united as theirs, not only by human nature but by divine grace as well, they are cast in the same mold of love. There are no barriers, no limits, no distances between them; no flagellation, no crown of thorns, and no cross, no matter how bitter it was, could separate these two. On the contrary, all this strengthened and unified their love even more and gave it more life. The union of hearts only became more profound in the loving silence of suffering than it would have done in the audible and visible communication of words and gestures; and we too shall find this to be more effective at the hour of truth!

-What must the scandalmongers have said of that friendship as they watched the Blessed Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene ascend and descend the hill of Calvary! But the Blessed Virgin Mary braved it all, in order that in a future generation we might have hope in her as the "Refuge of Sinners." Hence let there be no fear that she cannot understand our sinful misery because she is immaculate, for if she had Mary Magdalene as a companion then, why can she not have us now?

-Outstanding among the saints is Mary, Mother of the Lord and mirror of all holiness. In the *Gospel of Luke* we find her engaged in a service of charity to her cousin Elizabeth, with whom she remained for about three months (1:56) so as to assist her in the final phase of her pregnancy. *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*, she says on the occasion of that visit, My soul magnifies the Lord (Lk 1:46). In these words she expresses her whole programme of life: not setting herself at the centre, but leaving space for God, who is encountered both in prayer and in service of neighbor only then does goodness enter the world.

-Mary's greatness consists in the fact that she wants to magnify God, not herself. She is lowly: her only desire is to be the handmaid of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:38, 48).

She knows that she will only contribute to the salvation of the world if, rather than carrying out her own projects, she places herself completely at the disposal of God's initiatives. Mary is a woman of hope: only because she believes in God's promises and awaits the salvation of Israel, can the angel visit her and call her to the decisive service of these promises.

-Mary is a woman of faith: Blessed are you who believed, Elizabeth says to her (cf. Lk 1:45). The *Magnificat* a portrait, so to speak, of her soul is entirely woven from threads of Holy Scripture, threads drawn from the Word of God. Here we see how completely at home Mary is with the Word of God, with ease she moves in and out of it. She speaks and thinks with the Word of God; the Word of God becomes her word, and her word issues from the Word of God. Here we see how her thoughts are attuned to the thoughts of God, how her will is one with the will of God. Since Mary is completely imbued with the Word of God, she is able to become the Mother of the Word Incarnate.

-Finally, Mary is a woman who loves. How could it be otherwise? As a believer who in faith thinks with God's thoughts and wills with God's will, she cannot fail to be a woman who loves. We sense this in her quiet gestures, as recounted by the infancy narratives in the Gospel. We see it in the delicacy with which she recognizes the need of the spouses at Cana and makes it known to Jesus. We see it in the humility with which she recedes into the background during Jesus' public life, knowing that the Son must establish a new family and that the Mother's hour will come only with the Cross, which will be Jesus' true hour (cf. Jn 2:4; 13:1). When the disciples flee, Mary will remain beneath the Cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27); later, at the hour of Pentecost, it will be they who gather around her as they wait for the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 1:14).

-The lives of the saints are not limited to their earthly biographies but also include their being and working in God after death. In the saints one thing becomes clear: those who draw near to God do not withdraw from men, but rather become truly close to them. In no one do we see this more clearly than in Mary. The words addressed by the crucified Lord to his disciple John and through him to all disciples of Jesus: Behold, your mother! (Jn 19:27) are fulfilled anew in every generation. Mary has truly become the Mother of all believers.

-Men and women of every time and place have recourse to her motherly kindness and her virginal purity and grace, in all their needs and aspirations, their joys and sorrows, their moments of loneliness and their common endeavours. They constantly experience the gift of her goodness and the unfailing love which she pours out from the depths of her heart. The testimonials of gratitude,

offered to her from every continent and culture, are a recognition of that pure love which is not self-seeking but simply benevolent.

-At the same time, the devotion of the faithful shows an infallible intuition of how such love is possible: it becomes so as a result of the most intimate union with God, through which the soul is totally pervaded by him a condition which enables those who have drunk from the fountain of God's love to become in their turn a fountain from which flow rivers of living water (*Jn 7:38*). Mary, Virgin and Mother, shows us what love is and whence it draws its origin and its constantly renewed power. To her we entrust the Church and her mission in the service of love:

-Holy Mary, Mother of God, you have given the world its true light, Jesus, your Son the Son of God. You abandoned yourself completely to God's call and thus became a wellspring of the goodness which flows forth from him. Show us Jesus. Lead us to him. Teach us to know and love him, so that we too can become capable of true love and be fountains of living water in the midst of a thirsting world.

-God had been **in nature as Providence**; He had been **in history as prophecy**; now, when the fullness of time comes, God **appears in history as man**. At a precise moment of human history, God cut into the processes by taking upon Himself a human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

-And do you, O holy angels, honor the mother of your King whilst you adore the child of our Virgin, Him whom both you and we acknowledge as our Sovereign Lord, who is the Redeemer of our race and the Restorer of your city. To the same, therefore, so sublime with you in heaven, so humble with us on earth, let us all unite in showing the reverence which His Majesty requires, and the honor and glory which is due to His condescension both now and forevermore (St. Bernard).

-There is indeed a wonderful appropriateness in this comparison of her to a star, because as a star sends out its rays without detriment to itself, so did the Virgin bring forth her child without injury to her integrity. And as the ray emitted does not diminish the brightness of the star, so neither did the child born of her tarnish the beauty of Mary's virginity.

-In the Acts of the Apostles we read that Stephen was full of grace and that the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, but quite differently from Mary. The fullness of the godhead did not dwell bodily in Stephen as it did in Mary. The Apostles did not conceive by the Holy Spirit as she did.

-But what is more astonishing is that when the angel arrived he found the person by whom he had been sent was already with the Virgin.

-Whatever of temporal honor she could have had among her people, whatever of earthly riches from her father's house, she counted it all as dross that so she might gain Christ (St. Bernard).

-Oh Mary, the Lord with thee is not the Son alone whom thou hast clothed with thy flesh: He is also the Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast conceived, and He is also the Father by whom from eternity thy child is begotten. The Father, I say, is with thee, who has given His Son to be also thine. The Son is with thee, who in a marvelous way hast entered thy womb without detriment to thy virginity. The Holy Spirit is with thee, who, with the Father and the Son, has prepared thy virginal body to be the dwelling of the Word.

-Fear not, Oh prudent Virgin, the fruitfulness offered thee, because it shall leave thy virginity inviolate. Thou shalt conceive, yet without concupiscence; thou shalt be pregnant, yet not burdened; thou shalt bring forth, yet not with sadness; thou shalt be a mother, yet know not man.

-Virgins, who are truly such, are want to be always fearful, and can never feel secure. And in their anxiety to avoid all real danger, they tremble at what is only an appearance. For they know that they carry their precious treasure in an earthen vessels, and that it is extremely difficult to live as angels among men, to lead on earth the life proper to heaven, and to live in the flesh without living according to the flesh.

-She was troubled came from her virginal modesty; that she was not confounded was due to her fortitude, while it was under the influence of her prudence that she held her peace and reflected.

-The prudent Virgin was well aware that the angel of darkness often transforms himself into an angel of light; and as she was humble and simple, she could not believe that any holy angel would greet her thus.

-Oh, if thou knew how pleasing thy humility is to the Most High and what a sublime throne of glory awaits thee in His kingdom! Then thou would no longer deem thyself unworthy to be saluted and served by angels.

-And what is this grace which thou hast found? It is the reconciliation of men with God, the destruction of death, and the restoration of life. Yes, such is the grace thou hast found with God (St. Bernard).

-It is clear that the praise which we offer to the Mother redounds to the honor of the Son, and, conversely, when we glorify the Son we are at the same time honoring the Mother (St. Bernard).

-At first she prudently held her peace, while, still in doubt, she "thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be"; for, being humble, she chose rather to answer nothing at all than rashly to say what she knew not.

-"How shall this be done, because I know not man?" It is not that she doubts the fact: she only inquires concerning the means and the manner. For she does not ask "whether shall this be done?" but, "How shall this be done?" As if she should say, "Since my Lord who is the witness of my conscience, knows that His handmaid has vowed to preserve her virginity, by what means and in what manner is He pleased that this be done? Should it be necessary to set aside my vow, in order to become the mother of so great a Son, I shall rejoice indeed because of the Son, but I shall grieve at having to sacrifice my virginity: however, may His will be done. But if I am to conceive as a virgin and to bring forth as a virgin, which, if He so please, is certainly within His power to accomplish, then I shall know in truth that 'He has regard the humility of His handmaid.'"

-Why was it necessary to announce to the virgin that her hitherto sterile cousin had also conceived? The true reason why her cousin's pregnancy was announced to the virgin was in order that her joy might be multiplied by hearing of such a succession of prodigies. For it was necessary that she, who was destined soon in the joy of the Holy Spirit to conceive the Son of the Father's charity, should be prevented and flooded with an unprecedented inundation of gladness and love; because it was only the most loving and the most joyous hearts that could contain Him who is the infinite Treasures of divine love and sweetness. Or perhaps for this reason was Elizabeth's pregnancy made known to Mary, because it was manifestly fitting that the Virgin should hear from the angel before learning from men a fact which was soon to be everywhere published. Otherwise it would have been thought that the mother of God was excluded from the counsels of her Son, if she were kept in ignorance of what was taking place so near her on the earth.

-Or, again, Mary may have been informed of her cousin's condition, to the end that, being notified now of the Savior's, and now of the Precursor's coming, she might the better remember the time and the order of the events, and so be better able to make known the truth afterwards to the apostles and evangelists, as one who had been fully and supernaturally enlightened concerning these mysteries from the beginning.

-Or, finally, the purpose of telling the Virgin that Elizabeth had conceived may have been this: that the news of the elder cousin's condition might remind the younger of the claims of charity; so that the Virgin's hasty journey to the hill country to visit her kinswoman might afford the unborn prophet an opportunity of rendering the first-fruits of his service to His still younger Lord; and that, while the meeting of mothers and infants excited the joyous devotion of all, wonders should be followed by wonders more astonishing (St. Bernard).

-What indeed can there be of harshness or austerity in Him who even in His nativity, inflicted on His mother neither pain nor loss? O truly unprecedented marvels! A child is conceived without shame and brought forth without sorrow! The curse pronounced upon Eve, is for our Virgin changed into a blessing! For neither pain nor sorrow attended Mary's childbirth. The malediction, I say, has become a benediction, so that now, O happy Mother, as was predicted of thee by Gabriel, "Blessed art thou among women."

-O happy Virgin, happy in that, alone of all women, thou has escaped the curse and obtained the blessing; in that thou alone had been delivered from the universal malediction, and freed from the sorrows of motherhood!

-O prodigy unheard of! A Virgin brings forth and after parturition remains a virgin inviolate; combining maternal fecundity with virginal integrity (St. Bernard, Sermon For Christmas Eve.)

-Praying to Mary leads one to the heart of the Gospels, which is being a faithful disciple of Christ. You know a tree by its fruits. Prayer to Mary brings the experience of the fruits of the Holy Spirit

-Humility is never found alone, since God always "give grace to the humble." Therefore, the shepherds found "Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." For as the infancy of the Savior manifestly designates the virtue of humility, in the same way is continence represented by the Virgin, and Justice by Joseph (St. Bernard, Sermon For Christmas Day).

Mary The First Contemplative

-It has been said that the Blessed Virgin Mary was the first Christian contemplative and serves as a model for us all....It is St. Luke who brings out this aspect of Mary's spirituality. In chapter 8, Luke has the parable of the sower. When the Lord Jesus explains it to His disciples, He says that the seed that fell in the good soil "are the ones, who, when they hear the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patient endurance" (8, 15). Then He goes on to tell the disciples to "pay attention to how to listen" (8, 18). At this point, someone tells the Lord that His mother and brothers came to see Him. He immediately replies, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (8, 21). Mary and the other relatives of the Lord are here put forward as examples of the seed that fell on good soil. The Lord insists again on this when, as Luke narrates in 11, 27-28, a woman in the crowd praised His mother. In replying, Christ pointed out that true blessedness lies not in His mother's physical relationship with Him, but rather in her hearing God's word and obeying it.

-This is totally in line with Luke's overall presentation of Mary. From the very start he presents her listening to God's word and consenting to it in the annunciation, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (1, 38). Elizabeth then praises her for believing the word that was spoken to her (1, 45).

-Later in his infancy narrative, Luke has two annotations of particular importance in this regard. After the shepherds' visit, he says that "Mary kept all these words and pondered them in her heart" (2, 19), and after the finding of the Lord Jesus in the temple, at the very end of the infancy narrative, Luke notes, "His mother retained all these things in her heart" (2,51).

-In biblical spirituality a great emphasis is laid on listening and remembering. For instance, In the book of Deuteronomy Moses exhorts the Israelites: "Take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life" (4, 9). God's works that the biblical authors ask the people to remember are creation, the exodus from Egypt and the other interventions of God in the history of His people. These are works that manifest God's wisdom and those who ponder them become consequently wise. They start seeing things as God sees them. Moreover, considering God's past actions, one learns how to respond to God who is still at work in the life of His people.

-Of course, Mary was Jewish. She was brought up in this spirituality of listening and keeping in mind. What did Mary retain in her heart? Luke tells us that she kept in her heart "all the words" of the shepherds who referred what the angel had told them about the child (2, 18-19). Later, after recounting the Lord Jesus' response to Mary and Joseph when they found Him in the temple and how He then followed them obediently to Nazareth, Luke says that Mary "retained all these things"....

-It is true to say that no one has penetrated the mystery of Christ in all its depths than Our Lady. St. John the Evangelist & St. Mary Magdalene did see very far into this mystery and St. Paul often speaks of the "knowledge" he had received of it, yet all the saints dwell in shadow compared with Our Lady's light! The secret she kept and pondered in her heart is unspeakable; no tongue can tell it, no pen can express it (St. Elizabeth of the Blessed Trinity).

-In the Acts of the Apostles we read that Stephen was full of grace and that the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, but quite differently from Mary. The fullness of the godhead did not dwell bodily in Stephen as it did in Mary. The Apostles did not conceive by the Holy Spirit as she did.

-St. Bernard of Clairvaux said that whatever of temporal honor she could have had among her people, whatever of earthly riches from her father's house, she counted it all as dross that so she might gain Christ.

-In addressing the angels, St. Bernard goes on to say: "And do you, O holy angels, honor the mother of your King whilst you adore the child of our Virgin, Him whom both you and we acknowledge as our Sovereign Lord, who is the Redeemer of our race and the Restorer of your city. To the same, therefore, so sublime with you in heaven, so humble with us on earth, let us all unite in showing the reverence which His Majesty requires, and the honor and glory which is due to His condescension both now and forevermore."

-The Fathers of the Church see Mary not merely as passively engaged by God, but as freely cooperating in the work of the salvation of the human race through faith and obedience. For, as St. Irenaeus says, she "being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." Hence not a few of the early Fathers gladly assert with him in their preaching: "the knot of Eve's disobedient was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith."

-Comparing Mary with Eve, they call her "Mother of the living," and frequently claim: "death through Eve, life through Mary."

seeking the Favor of the Blessed Virgin Mary

"Since he is your Lord, bow to him; the people of Tyre will sue your favour with gifts, the richest of the people with all kinds of wealth."

-We believe with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our strength, and with all our soul, that Christ Jesus is God; therefore, we are bound to bow down to Him. In His name every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

-Christ the Lord was a king by birth; wherefore, like the three wise men from the East who bowed down before Him offering their gifts, we too are wise to bow down to Him in homage of His royalty offering what we have, that is, our body and our soul because these are the most precious gifts we can possibly offer to Him.

-If we feel unworthy to present these gifts to Him because of our sinfulness, then, we have to offer them through the Blessed Virgin Mary who will present them to Him. St. Bernard of Clairvaux said that if we want to offer something to God and don't want to be refused, we have to offer them through the Blessed Virgin. Can God refuse her offering? Absolutely not! Hence, people from age to age seek her favor to have their prayers and petitions answered favorably by God.

-We have to assert though that in seeking her favor we do not worship her but pray to her, and not in the same way we pray to God. Take this example: If I got sick and asked you to pray for me, you would. This does not make you uniquely Catholic, or even uniquely Christian. There are many non-Christians who believe in the power of prayer. If you ask your non-Catholic Christian friends whether they pray for their spouse or their children, they will say yes. If you ask them to pray for you, they will say yes.

-This is the same principle when people from one generation to the next seek the favor of the ever glorious Blessed Virgin Mary. Though she died to this present life, yet we believe that she lives on in the next life. And we believe that her prayers are just as powerful – even more powerful than all the angels and saints combined together. Therefore, when we seek her favor we are essentially saying to her: "We have problems down here. You know what it is like because you have been here; pray for us!"

-We have also to affirm that the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is only an intervention, whereas that of the Lord Jesus is an immolation. The Blessed Virgin is an advocate who intercedes, whereas the Lord Jesus is the mediator who pays. However, the intervention of this Virgin Most Blessed, even as advocate, is a potent force; a vigorous power for us because she excels in lifting us. No wonder, then, that the saints, formally canonized or not, are the most assiduous in pursuing her gracious favors with gifts of their own lives and the richest of their virtues and the wealth of their weaknesses for when they were weak, then, they were strong because the Lord's grace was sufficient for them.

-We, too, have to seek her favor because never was it heard that anyone who plead to her protection, implored her help, or sought her intercession was left unaided. In doing so, it is very likely that we will arrive at our final destination, that is, the kingdom of Our Lord Jesus where we will be decked with glory and honor and immortality.

«Let it be done to me according to your word»

(Luke 1:38).

-When the Virgin Mary uttered these words, she gave herself up completely to the creative power of the Word of God. In that power she conceived the Word in her womb, and brought Him forth as her Son. She also received the power to proclaim the Word in a new and up to then unknown way. She did this in her Magnificat and so she became a prophet.

-Mary belongs to both Old and New Testaments, and as such she is a prophet. She shows a sensitivity and announces a new meaning which belong to the new age – that age which the Spirit has come to inaugurate in her person.

-The words which the monk receives in order to share them with others have this same quality. The monk too lives on the frontier between two epochs in the history of salvation. Not that he stands between the Old and the New, but between the time of the Church and that of the world to come. The monk is rooted in the former, and already has a foretaste and even almost a vision of the latter in his heart.

-Like the Virgin Mary, the monk is an intermediary figure, standing on the threshold between time and eternity. He is both passing by and waiting. The old world is still there and the monk belongs to it. But the new world has begun to break through, at least momentarily and in brief flashes.

-Without understanding it clearly the monk has received a sort of illumination of it. On his lips, as on those of the Virgin Mary, the words of the psalms have a new taste, the taste of the world to come. In this sense the monk too is a prophet. His life is a prophetic sign at the heart of the world. The life of the monk is an image of what we await in eternal life.

-In the Virgin Mary the love of God for His creatures reaches its apogee and fulfillment – the fullness of beauty and of love. The Virgin Mary is the fullness of all beauty and of love. She alone is already the plenitude of the Church. She is the Bride of the Word and His eternal joy.

-She is the joy of God, who through her has assumed all humanity into the Incarnate Word, come to inaugurate the new temple, in the heart of the Trinity, where praise and thanksgiving will be forever sung.

-This heavenly liturgy is even now shared in by the liturgical assembly of the Church. In every liturgy "a door is opened in heaven" (Rev. 4:1), which enables us to see some reflection of the beauty and love which are in God.

-The monk is present to this every day and night. The door is open not only in the community of his brethren gathered for worship but also in his own heart. St. Isaac of Syria says: "Enter into your own heart and find the door that opens on Paradise."

-The monk has received everything from God, even that beauty which increases in him daily and gradually transforms him into the likeness of Christ. Over the long years of monastic life he has grown old. Yet he remains ever young, with unquenchable hope and with wonder at the goodness and kindness of God. His eyes are the eyes of a child who never ceases to marvel at the mighty deeds of God.

-He is considered as a good and beautiful old man. Is there any achievement greater or more splendid than this, that a man, humble and unaware, should reflect the goodness and the beauty of God?

-The Blessed Virgin Mary did not fully understand the message of the angel. She has no doubts whether it will happen, but how it will happen. She opens herself to where the message will lead her. She was not afraid to take the responsibility to be the mother of God although she did not understand the full implication of this.

-Mary is the first disciple to receive the Word both in her body and soul. She was already pregnant with the Word of God in her heart before she conceives Him in her womb.

-The contemplatives are constantly covering the world with their co-redeeming prayer. This is what our Lady did in the cenacle. While the first apostles went forth to labor and to die, Mary, silent in prayer, accompanied them to all their battles for Christ.

-Mary is the first living tabernacle where the Father enclosed His Son. Her Immaculate Heart is the monstrance which held Him. Her lap and arms were the first altar and the first throne on which the Son of God made man was worshiped. There the angels, the shepherds and the wise men adored Him.

-"Christ became man by the Virgin so that the disobedience which proceeds from the serpent might be destroyed in the same way as it originated. For Eve, being a virgin and undefiled, having conceived the word from the serpent,

brought forth disobedience and death. The Virgin Mary, however, having received faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel announced to her the good tidings...answered: "Be it done to me according to thy word" (St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 100, 5).

-If you want to get to know the Son, you must look at the heart of the Mother. In Jesus as in any other Son we see the plain evidence of maternal influence; that is why we shall go on to contemplate the sweetest heart of the Virgin, His most Holy Mother.

Motherhood and Filiation

-Motherhood and filiation are two congruent terms, and congruent terms usually have concurrence. Thus, Christ was predestined from all eternity as the son of God and head of all humankind by the same decree by which Mary was predestined to become His Mother. Thus, Mary is inseparably united to God; before the Incarnation, the Messianic hope and expectation; in the Incarnation, in the faith of the Word Incarnate, her son; after the Incarnation, in love and union with Jesus Christ in the universal redemption of the human race.

-When through the spiritual motherhood of Mary we acquired divine filiation in Christ we actually participated in her own nature. Just as any small child go to his mother, so do we go to our Mother in Heaven, like children, we look for protection and refuge to her.

-Love for the Virgin Mary is the shortest and safest way to go to Christ. How easy it is to love the Son if we contemplate the heart of His Mother! As Jesus came to us through Mary, we go to Jesus through Mary. As Mary mothered His physical body, she also mothers all the members of His Mystical Body. Both Mary and the Church is the spiritual mother of Christian souls, enabling them ever more pleasing to God.

-Little by little Mary forms us; little by little she brings us more to Christ Jesus so that we become more and more like her elder son, our brother. Mary's love is continually directed toward the glory of Christ and the Father through the fulfillment of God's will in perfect souls.

-Matthew Kelly said: "Do Catholics worship Mary and the saints? No. We pray to them but not to worship them, and not in the same way we pray to God. Think of it in this way: if you got sick and asked me to pray for you, I would. This does not make me uniquely Catholic or even unique Christian. →

-There are many non-Christians who believe in the power of prayer. If I ask my non-Catholic friends whether they pray for their spouse or their children, they will say yes. If I ask them to pray for me, they will say yes. This is the same principle. We believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints are dead to this world, but we also believe they live on in the next world. And we believe that their prayers are just as powerful – even more powerful. We are essentially saying to them, "We have problems down here. You know what is like because you have been here; pray for us"!

-Mary is the most famous woman in history. She leads all prominent women who have earned their fame by living a life of virtue such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She has inspired more art and music than any other woman in history, and even in modern age, she fascinates the imaginations of men and women, of all faiths. In our age, Mary appeared on the cover of Time Magazine more often than any other person.

-But beyond her fame and her historical importance is her centrality to Christian life. The first Christians gathered around her for comfort and guidance, yet some modern Catholics treat her like she has contagious disease. One of the great challenges that we face as modern Catholics is to find genuine place for Mary in our spirituality, like Pope John Paul II did.

-A mother has a unique perspective. Nobody sees the life of a child the way the child's mother does – not even the Father. This is Mary's perspective of her Son Jesus' life. Every genuine Christian, not just Catholics, should be interested in this perspective – and not just interested, but fascinated.

-Our love for Our Lord Jesus cannot and must not ever be separated from our love for the Blessed Virgin Mary, for we cannot please the Lord Jesus if we do not also love His and our Mother. Nor will our love reach God in true perfection unless it is made to pass through the love of Mary, the one and only creature who has ever loved God here below in the way He wishes to be loved and ought to be loved.

-In discussion on spiritual motherhood and spiritual filiation, what we hear seems to be about motherhood and a filiation somehow distant from that relationship in human life, as if it were so different that it did not concern us. And this is because we are still concerned with the flesh. The flesh is real, but the Spirit is more real.

-She teaches with her heroic life, with her self-sacrificing heart which keeps her sons in mind always. Mothers show with their eyes, and make us feel in their caresses, the maternal warmth of their arms.

-The mediation of Mary is an intervention, whereas that of the Lord Jesus is immolation. Mary is an advocate who intercedes; Christ is the Mediator who pays. But the intervention of Mary, even as an advocate, is a force; a power for us, because she excels in lifting us.

-Most Holy Mother, supreme glorifier of the Most Blessed Trinity! How proud we are to have you as our mother!

-One can very well object that Mary followed the Passion of her Son at a distance, if you measure love in yards and feet. But when two hearts are inextricably united as theirs, not only by human nature but by divine grace as well, they are cast in the same mold of love. There are no barriers, no limits, no distances between them; no flagellation, no crown of thorns, and no cross, no matter how bitter it was, could separate these two. On the contrary, all this strengthened and unified their love even more and gave it more life. The union of hearts only became more profound in the loving silence of suffering than it would have done in the audible and visible communication of words and gestures; and we too shall find this to be more effective at the hour of truth!

What the Churches teaches On Mary

-“The Church carefully teaches us, her children, with what attention and confidence we should unceasingly have recourse to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our loving protectress. The church wishes us always to seek her and invoke her aid, not as if she were begging of us these honors and marks of veneration (for they are in no way proportioned to her merit) but she desires them that, by such means, our confidence and devotion may be increased, and that she may be able to give us greater succor and comfort.

-“She, in the exercise of her mercy, knows not how to act differently from God, for as God flies at once to the assistance of those who beg his aid, faithful to his promise, ‘Ask, and you shall receive,’ so the Blessed virgin Mary, whenever she is invoked, is at once ready to assist everyone who pray to her.

-“Nor should the multitude of our sins diminish our confidence that she will grant our petitions when we cast ourselves at her feet. She is the mother of mercy, but mercy would not be needed did none exist who require it.

-On this account, Richard of St. Laurence remarks that as a good mother does not shrink from applying a remedy to her child infected with ulcers, however nauseous and revolting they may be, so also is our good mother unable to abandon us when we have recourse to her, that she may heal the wounds caused by our sins, however loathsome they may have rendered us.

-“This good Mother's compassion is so great, and the love she bears us is such that she does not even wait for our prayers in order to assist us, as St. Anselm says, she is before hand with those who desire her protection.

-“Her love for us is so tender, that in our wants she anticipates our prayers, and her mercy is more prompt to help us than we are to ask her aid. And this arises, adds Richard of St. Victor, from the fact that the heart of Mary is so filled with compassion for poor sinners, that she no sooner sees our miseries than she pours her tender mercies upon us. Nor is it possible for this benign Queen to behold the want of any soul without immediately assisting it.”

-Our Lord Jesus gave more glory to God the Father by submission to His mother during those thirty years than He would have given Him in converting the whole world by the working of the most stupendous miracles (St. Louis de Montfort).

-The Holy Spirit, the more He finds Mary, His dear and inseparable spouse, in any soul, the more active & mighty He becomes in producing Jesus Christ in that soul, and that soul in Jesus Christ.

-When the Holy Spirit, her spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. He enters there in His fullness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His spouse.

The greatest saints, the soul rich in graces and virtues, shall be the most assiduous in praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in having her always present as their perfect model for imitation and their powerful aid for help.

-Just as in the natural and corporal generation of children there are father and mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there are a father, who is God, and a mother, who is Mary.

-You never think of Mary without Mary's thinking God for you. You never praise or honor Mary without Mary's praising and honoring God with you. The Hail Mary well said, that is, with attention, devotion and modesty, is, according to the saints, the enemy of the devil which puts him to flight, and the hammer which crushes him. It is the sanctification of the soul, the joy of the angels, the melody of the predestinate, the canticle of the New Testament, the pleasure of Mary, and the glory of the Most Holy Trinity. The Hail Mary is a heavenly dew which fertilizes the soul. It is the chaste and loving kisses which we gave to Mary

-The Lord could have created a more beautiful heaven, he could have made a larger world, but he could not have created a mother greater than the mother of God (St. Bonaventure).

-True devotion to Mary is for the strong because Mary brings her true child to where she was: at the foot of the cross.

The Role of Mary in the Church

-One cannot go to a statue of a mother holding a babe, hack away the mother, and expect to have the babe. Touch her and you spoil the Son. All other world religions are lost in myth and legend except Christianity. Christ is cut off from all the Gods of paganism because He is tied to woman and history.

-It is easier to understand the meek and humble heart of Christ by looking at His Mother. She holds all the great truths of Christianity together, as a piece of wood holds a kite. Children wrap the string of kite around a stick, and release the string as the kite climbs to the heavens.

-Mary is like that piece of wood. Around her we wrap all the precious strings of the great truths of our holy faith, for example, the Incarnation, the Eucharist, the Trinity, the Church. NO matter how far we get above the earth, as the kite may, we always have need of Mary to hold the doctrines of the Creed together. If we threw away the stick, we would no longer have the kite; if we threw away Mary, we would never have Our Lord. He would be lost in the heavens, like our runaway kite, and that would be terrible, indeed, for us on earth.

-Mary does not prevent our honoring Our Lord. Nothing is more cruel than to say that she takes souls away from Christ. That could mean that Our Lord chose a mother who is selfish, He Who is love itself. If she kept us from her Son, we would disown her! But is not she, who is the Mother of Jesus, good enough for us sinners? We would never have Our Lord if He had not chosen her.

-We pray to the Heavenly Father, "Give us this day our daily bread." Though we ask God for our daily bread, we do not hate the farmer nor the baker who help prepare it. Neither does the mother who gives the bread to her child dispense with the heavenly provider. If the only charge Our Lord has against us on Judgment Day is that we loved His Mother – then we shall be very happy!

-As our love does not start with Mary, so neither does it stop with Mary. Mary is a window through which our humanity first catches a glimpse of divinity on earth. Or perhaps she is more like a magnifying glass that intensifies our love of her Son, and makes our prayers more bright and burning.

-God, who made the sun, also made the moon. The moon does not take away from the brilliance of the sun. The moon would be only a burn-out cinder floating in the intensity of space, were it not for the sun. All its light is reflected from the

sun. The Blessed Mother reflects her Divine Son; without Him, she is nothing. With Him, she is the mother of men.

-On dark nights we are grateful for the moon; when we see it shining, we know there must be a sun. So in this dark night of the world when men turn their backs on God Who is the light of the world, we look to Mary to guide our feet while we await the sunrise.

-Every person carries within his heart a blueprint of the one he loves. What seems to be "love at first sight" is actually the fulfillment of desire. For instance, when we hear music for the first time, we either like or dislike it. We judge it by the music we already have heard in our hearts. Jittery minds, which cannot long repose in one object of thought or in continuity of an ideal, love music which is distracting, jittery, and jumpy. Calm minds like calm music: the heart has its own secret melody. So it is with love.

-A tiny architect works inside the human heart drawing sketches of the ideal love from the people it sees, from the books it reads, from its hopes that the eye may one day see the ideal.

-Some go through life without ever meeting what they call their idea. This could be very disappointing if the ideal never really existed. But the absolute ideal of every heart does exist, and it is God. All human love is an initiation into the eternal.

-God, too, has within Himself blueprints of everything in the universe. As the architect has in his mind a plan of the house before the house is built, so God has in His mind an archetypal idea of every flower, bird, tree, springtime, and melody. There never was a brush touched to canvass nor a chisel to marble without some great pre-existing idea. So, too, every atom and every rose is a realization and concretion of an idea existing in the mind of God from all eternity.

-All creatures correspond to the pattern God has in mind. A tree is a truly a tree because it is God's idea of a tree. A rose is a rose because it is God's idea of a rose wrapped up in chemicals and tints and life.

-The oft repeated suggestion that woman is more religious than man has some basis in truth, but only in the sense that her nature is more disposed toward the ideal, which is God.

-Woman stands up better in a crisis than man. The best way to arrive at a conclusion is to go to the greatest crisis the world ever faced, namely, the Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus.

-When we come to this great drama of Calvary, there is one fact that stands out very clearly: men failed. Judas, who had eaten at His table, lifted up his heel against Him, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and then blistered His lips with a kiss, suggesting that all betrayals of divinity are so terrible that they must be prefaced by some marks of esteem and affection.

-Pilate, the typical time-serving politician, afraid of incurring the hatred of his government if he released a man whom he already admitted was innocent, sentenced Him to death. Annas and Caiphas resorted to illegal night trials and false witnesses, and rent their garments as if scandalized at His divinity.

-The three chosen Apostles, who had witnessed the Transfiguration, and, therefore, were strong enough to endure the scandal of seeing the shepherd struck, slept in a moment of greatest need, because they were unworried and untroubled.

-On the way to Calvary, a stranger, interested only in the drama of a man going to execution, was compelled to offer Him a helping hand. On Calvary itself, there is only one of the twelve Apostles present, John, and one wonders if even he would have been there had it not been for the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Our Lord.

-On the other hand, there is not a single instance of a woman's failing Him. At the trial, the only voice that is raised in His defense is the voice of a woman. Braving the fury of court officials, she breaks into the judgment hall and bids her husband, Pilate, not to condemn the "just man."

-On the way to Calvary, although a man is forced to help carry the Cross, the pious women of Jerusalem, ignoring the mockery of the soldiers and bystanders, console Him with words of sympathy. One of them wipes His face with a towel, and, forever after, has the name Veronica, which means "true image," for it was His image Christ left on her towel.

-On Calvary itself, there are three women present, and the name of each is Mary: Mary of Magdala, who is forever at His feet, and will be there again on Easter morning; Mary of Cleopas, the mother of James and John, and Mary, the mother of Our Lord – the three types of souls forever to be found beneath the Cross: penitence, motherhood, and virginity.

-Since woman today has failed to restrain man, we have to look the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Woman, to restore purity. The Church proclaims two dogmas of purity for this Woman: one, the purity of soul in the Immaculate Conception, the other, the purity of body in the Assumption.

-Purity is not glorified as ignorance; for when the Virgin Birth was announced to Mary, she said, "I know not man." This meant not only that she was untaught by pleasures; it is also implied that she had so brought her soul to focus on inwardness that she was a virgin, not only through the absence of man, but through the Presence of God.

-No greater inspiration to purity has the world ever known than the this Woman, whose on life was so pure that God chose her as His mother. But she also understands human frailty and so is prepared to lift souls out of the mire into peace, as at the Cross she chose as her companion the converted sinner Magdalene.

-Though all the centuries, to those who marry to be loved, Mary teaches that they should marry to love. To the unwed, she bids them all keep the secret of purity until an annunciation, when God will send them a partner; to those who, in carnal love, allow the body to swallow the soul, she bids that the soul envelop the body.

-To the 20th century, with its Freud and lust, she bids man to be made again to the God-like image through herself as The Woman while she, in turn hands over to Christ – Who in His turn delivers us to the Father, that God may be all in all.

star of the Sea

-The title was used to emphasize Mary's role as a sign of hope and as a guiding star for Christians, especially gentiles, whom the Old Testament Israelites metaphorically referred to as the sea, meaning anyone beyond the "coasts", or, that is to say, sociopolitical, and religious (Mosaic law), borders of Israelite territory. Under this title, the Virgin Mary is believed to intercede as a guide and protector of those who travel or seek their livelihoods on the sea.

-*Stella Maris* "sea-star" is a name of a *Ursae Minoris* or *Polaris*, the "guiding star" (also "lodestar", "ship star", "steering star", etc.) because it has been used for celestial navigation at sea since antiquity.

-Paschasius Radbertus in the ninth century wrote of Mary, Star of the Sea, as a guide to be followed on the way to Christ "lest we capsize amid the storm-tossed waves of the sea." At this time too the plainsong hymn "Ave Maris Stella" ("Hail, Star of the Sea"), became increasingly popular.

-It was St. Bernard who gave impetus to the strong devotion to Our Lady that flourished in the later Middle Ages. Titus Burckhardt speaks of the ambiance of the times: "Various currents flowed together and formed a new and reawakened cult of the Holy Virgin: the longing for the Holy Land, the true home, the need to turn to the maternal mercy of God, and the chivalric cult of the celestial Lady as the epitome of nobility of soul, innocence and beauty."

-St. Bernard himself, who knew how to call forth the highest spiritual powers of his contemporaries, is said to have been the first to use the chivalric mode of address *Notre Dame* (Our Lady) for the Mother of God." And in his famous sermon, "Star of the Sea" St. Bernard wrote:

-“She, I tell you is that splendid and wondrous star suspended as by necessity over this great wide sea, radiant with merit and brilliant in example. O you, whoever you are, who feel that in the tidal wave of this world you are nearer to being tossed about among the squalls and gales than by treading on dry land, if you do not want to sink in the tempest, do not avert your eyes from the brightness of this star. When you strike upon the rock of tribulation, when the wind of temptation blows up within you, gaze up at this star, call out to Mary.

-“Whether you are being tossed about by the waves of pride or ambition or slander or jealousy, look up at this star, call out to Mary. When rage or anger or resentment or malice or hatred or lust or greed or fleshly desires are battering the skiff of your soul, gaze up at Mary, call out to Mary. When the immensity of your sins weighs you down and you are bewildered by the loathsomeness of

your conscience, when the terrifying thought of judgment appalls you and you begin to sink in the gulf of sadness and despair, think of Mary, call out to Mary.

-“In dangers, in hardships, in every doubt, think of Mary, call out to Mary. Keep her in your heart, keep her in your lips. Follow the example of her life and you will obtain the favor of her prayer. Asking her help, you will never despair. Keeping her in your thoughts, you will never wander away, following her, you will never go astray. With your hand in hers, you will never stumble. With her protecting you, you will not be afraid. With her leading you, you will not get tired. Her kindness will see you through to the end. Then you will know by your own experience how true it is that the Virgin's name was Mary.”

In Praise of Womanhood

-The oft repeated suggestion that woman is more religious than man has some basis in truth, but only in the sense that her nature is more disposed toward the ideal, which is God.

-Woman stands up better in crises than man. The best way to arrive at a conclusion is to go to the greatest crisis the world ever faced, namely, the Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus.

-When we come to this great drama of Calvary, there is one fact that stands out very clearly: men failed. Judas, who had eaten at His table, lifted up his heel against Him, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and then blistered his lips with a kiss, suggesting that all betrayals of divinity are so terrible that they must be prefaced by some marks of esteem and affection.

-Pilate, the typical time-serving politician, afraid of incurring the hatred of his government if he released a man whom he already admitted was innocent, sentenced Him to death. Annas and Caiphas resorted to illegal night trials and false witnesses, and rent their garments as if scandalized at His divinity.

-The three chosen Apostles, who had witnessed the Transfiguration, and, therefore, were strong enough to endure the scandal of seeing the shepherd struck, slept in a moment of greatest need, because they were unworried and untroubled.

-On the way to Calvary, a stranger, interested only in the drama of a man going to execution, was compelled to offer Him a helping hand. On Calvary itself, there is only one of the twelve Apostles present, John, and one wonders if even he would have been there had it not been for the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of Our Lord.

-On the other hand, there is not a single instance of a woman's failing Him. At the trial, the only voice that is raised in His defense is the voice of a woman. Braving the fury of court officials, she breaks into the judgment hall and bids her husband, Pilate, not to condemn the "just man."

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-Mary does not prevent our honoring Our Lord. Nothing is more cruel than to say that she takes souls away from Christ. That could mean that Our Lord chose a mother who is selfish, He who is love itself. If she kept us from her Son, we would disown her! But is not she, who is the Mother of the Lord Jesus, good enough for us sinners? We would never have Our Lord if He had not chosen her.

-We pray to the heavenly Father, "Give us this day our daily bread." Though we ask God for our daily bread, we do not hate the farmer or the baker who help prepare it. Neither does the mother who gives the bread to her child dispense with the heavenly provider. If the only Charge Our Lord has against us on Judgment Day is that we loved His Mother – then we shall be very happy for all eternity!

On Mindfulness of God

When Billy was little, he was very naughty. One day he came home from elementary school and did not realize that the pastor was inside talking to his parents. Without going into the house, he went around to the back yard to play. Suddenly he spotted a big, ugly, hairy rat under a bush.

Billy thought, "Boy, my mom and dad would be so proud of me if I killed that rat." So he grabbed his baseball bat, tiptoed up behind the rat, raised the bat over his head andWhap! He hit the rat with the bat. Then he stepped on it and smashed it with his foot, picked it up and bashed it against a tree, ran it through with his switchblade and killed it.

Little Billy wanted his folks to see what he had done so he picked up the bloody rat and raced inside, still not realizing the minister was there. With great excitement he exclaimed, "Mom! Dad! Look at this rat I just killed. You would have been so proud of me. I clubbed it over the head with my baseball bat. Then I stepped on it and smashed it with my foot, picked it up and bashed it against a tree, ran it through with my knife and....."

Just then Billy looked up and saw the pastor. With a pious demeanor, he held up the rat by its tail and with a solemn voice said, ".....and then the Lord called him home!"

MINDFULNESS OF GOD IN MONASTIC TRADITION

-Mindfulness or *memoria* is a significant theme in the various strands of thoughts and practice which constitute the Benedictine tradition. Monastic *conversatio* is not viewed as a pre-determined complex of attitudes & activities which relieves us from any responsibility from the distinctive fashioning of our lives. Monasticism is, rather, a constant flight from mindless & comfortable routines & evasions and the cultivation of contrary habits of mind such as: openness to grace, sensitivity to others need, and vigilance for the coming of the Lord.

-Monastic regimen is seen primarily as a structure of mindfulness through which we grow in our ability to perceive truth-about ourselves, about God, and about the world in which we live. The greatest obstacle to this work is *oblivio*, heedlessness, a consciousness so saturated with tangible employments that its capacity to absorb the things that are above is inhibited.

-The monks who forgets God forgets himself. He ceases to be concerned about the things which serve his ultimate welfare & habitually fails to take those steps which required by the reality of his own situation.

-He falls not through malice or overt weakness, but through thoughtlessness & unconcern. Unless he is roused by the sharp sting of compunction, his spiritual senses atrophy (decreases, wasting away) and salvation itself is place in jeopardy.

-Heedlessness inevitably issues in death. Forgetfulness of God brings death to the soul. From this death we rise thus: *by memory we become sensible, by obedience we hear, by understanding we see, by caution we smell, and we experience taste through love* (St. Bernard, Sent. 2.19).

-In monastic tradition the memory of God is more than a pious practice; it is the very dynamic of a life which is subordinated to the divine process of transformation.

3 STAGES OF MINDFULNESS

-In the first, mindfulness is very close to the notion of fear of the Lord; it connotes a seriousness in the ordering of life and a care to live within the limits fixed by the commandments.

-In the second stage, mindfulness becomes an active effort of mind & heart to retain and enter into the riches of revealed truth through meditation.

-Finally, mindfulness of God appears less as an action than as a transformed state of consciousness, in which every thought & word & deed take place within the context of the divine. Such is the purity of heart attained by one who has reached this level that his whole being is habitually possessed & transfigured by the presence of God.

MINDFULNESS AS PRAXIS

-According to St. Benedict, the fundamental dynamic in the process of humility is fear of the Lord. Fear of God is the basis & inspiration of humility just as transformation & perfect charity are its goal.

-The first step of humility is that, having the fear of God always before his eyes, the monk entirely flees from forgetfulness of God and is always mindful of everything that God has commanded. He constantly turns over in his mind that those who despise God burn in hell for their sins and how eternal life has been prepared for those who fear God.

-Before any positive progress can be expected, we have to assess soberly the extent of the labor to which we are committing ourselves. No effort is made to shield us from the difficulty of the journey to God nor to pretend that an undemanding enthusiasm will profit us.

-Instead, we are confronted immediately with the stark reality of our own sinfulness and we are expected, at the very beginning, to take practical measures to diminish its control over us.

-In the monastic tradition, compunction, contrition, and the fear of God are unequivocally declared to be the foundations of spiritual growth. The scope of St. Benedict's demand becomes clear from his insistence that our religious endeavor be considered a full-time occupation. The point he seems to be making is that a genuine religious response to life cannot be a part-time or eclectic project, sometimes to be indulged, at other times to be judiciously deferred.

-The first thing that we must do, then, is to win control over our own life; to succeed in this we need to exercise surveillance over all its details. A life characterized by forgetfulness of God is often not overtly sinful. Its danger lies in its capacity to engender sins of omission coupled with an unseeing sense of complacency.

-Peer pressure is normally sufficient to ensure that we comply with the external obligations of our state, with the result that there are usually rare infractions of major precepts.

-At the same time, however, the very struggle which we make in order to upgrade our observance often leads us into hidden sins. Either we become complacent and judges harshly those that cannot attain our standard or, alternatively, we begin to relax, preferring to rest on the plateau instead of continuing our climb. In both cases, growth is stopped without our becoming aware that such is the case.

-It is our mindfulness of the ultimate values in our lives and of our own personal precariousness which make us tireless in doing good & in avoiding evil. The first requirement for upright living is an upright understanding; if our mind has lost the capacity for distinguishing truth, then behavior inevitably deteriorates.

-Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because it sets us in the way of sober self-esteem, alerting us what need to be done & giving us the energy to translate theory into practice.

-When we are unaware of our actual state, we tend to become smug, locked into our private routines & somewhat removed from an appreciation that Christian life is a sustained struggle.

-Fear of the Lord compels us to protect ourselves, first of all, from sins & vices. St. Benedict said, "To fear the day of judgment. To dread Gehenna. To desire eternal life with the whole longing of one's spirit. Each day to place death before one's eyes. To know for certain that in every place God is watching us."

-Thus motivated, we begin to take steps to eliminate actions & behavior patterns that militate against evangelical living. Evagrius notes that it is often from the undisciplined memory that sin begins, making the monk restless & dissatisfied & inclining him to instinctual behavior.

-The effective negation of sin must, therefore, begin with the countering of instinctual thoughts & memories. The best means of doing this is to fill our mind with loftier contents (as St. Paul advice us to look at the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father). Psalms & hymns & spiritual canticles invite our spirit to the constant memory of virtue by cooling our boiling anger & extinguishing our lusts.

-Forgetfulness of God causes us to degenerate & opens the door to all sort of aberrations. What is even more dangerous is that it cuts us off from the sources of spiritual nourishment, so that even if we continue to follow monastic observances, we cease to gain much profit from them.

-St. Bernard of Clairvaux describes the condition produced by such forgetfulness:

"Brothers, you will find very many, even among those who wear the religious habit and are professedly seeking perfection, in whom the fearful sentence of the prophets seems to be realized: 'If I forget you Jerusalem, let my right hand be given to oblivion.' They become experienced, somewhat, but it is in the wisdom of this age which they ought to have given up, in those things which flesh & blood reveal and which, according to the Apostle, they should be unwilling to accept. See how eagerly they grasp at any present gain, how, like seculars, they enjoy fleeting conveniences, how their souls are so easily upset by earthly loss or deprivation of goods. See how carnally they dispute over such things, how shamelessly they pursue them, how they deny their religion to become involved in worldly business as if this was all they had, their entire substance."

-The first stage of mindfulness gives to our life the character of seriousness. We honestly confront the liabilities inherent in our personal history & the hardship of Christian discipleship and decide that we are not going to attain the goal we have set before us without sustained & painstaking application. There is no possibility of reaching God either through short burst of initial enthusiasm or by occasional plunder/forays/pillage into spirituality when the mood take us.

-Fear of the Lord makes us realize that in our particular case, responding to God's call involves a long, uphill struggle. Fear of the Lord simplifies our lives by motivating us consciously to channel the bulk of our energies in a single direction.

-Without some progress toward such undividedness, spiritual growth is impossible, or in traditional terms, nobody can realistically expect to attain the kingdom of God without striving after purity of heart.

-As we practice the presence of God, more and more we find ourselves going through the stresses and tensions of daily activity with an ease and serenity that amaze even us. So let us pray for that grace to be always mindful of God wherever we are, with whomsoever we, and whatever we are doing.

MINDFULNESS AND "MEDITATIO"

-Experience soon reveals that the labor of living under disciplined is lightened by keeping in mind the loving kindness of God and the power of his grace. St Bernard said:

"Therefore my advice to you, friends, is to turn aside from troubled & anxious reflection on your progress, and escape to the easier paths of remembering the good thing which God has done; in this way, instead of becoming upset by thinking about yourself, you will find relief by turning your attention to God....Sorrow for sins is indeed necessary but it should not become an endless preoccupation. You must dwell also in the glad remembrance of God's loving kindness, otherwise sadness will harden the heart and lead it more deeply to despair" (S.S., 11).

-It is only by positively placing before our eyes the memory of God and the ultimate truths of human existence that we are able to avoid succumbing to the dispiritedness & inertia which are engendered by concentration on the immediate situation.

-Monastic life, from its beginning, has been geared to promoting mindfulness. It is the practice of meditation which is the characteristic feature of the second stage of mindfulness. It is not so much an exercise in discursive thought or

constructive imagination, as the low-voiced recitation of what has been read, a process of rumination which forms a background to other activities & which opens the whole of life the mindfulness of God.

-William of St. Thierry describes the process in a well-known passage: *"Some part of your daily reading should, each day, be stored in the stomach (i.e., the memory) and be allowed to be digested. At times it should be brought up again for frequent rumination. You should select something that is in keeping with your vocation and in line with your personal orientation, something that will seize hold of your mind and not allow it to think over alien matters."*

-The years invested in the struggle to turn the mind around so that it regularly includes God within its natural horizons effect a change within the personality itself so that, in time, it is possible to accomplish naturally & easily what would have been very difficult in the beginning.

-There is no advantage in praying beyond one's level. Genuine prayer is always tailored to the reality of our own situation. What characterizes this stage of mindfulness is a fair degree of discipline, though we live from inner values rather than merely because of external constraints.

-St. Bernard said that we have to consider as a lost all the time in which we have no thought of God. With practice & through the grace of God, this becomes easier with the years, and even sporadic periods of backsliding seem to add something to the quality of the final blend.

-Prayer becomes habitual: the memory of God lives in our hearts & the name of Our Lord Jesus becomes as the air that is breathed.

MINDFULNESS AS TRANSFORMATION

-In the Cistercians of the 12th century, the terms seem to have a more intense connotation. Instead of being a sporadic exercise which punctuated the daily round, it is understood as a state of being in which the one who has faithfully struggled throughout the years becomes progressively immersed in God.

-Mindfulness, writes St. Aelred, is like the soul's embrace by which it clings to God without any trace of forgetfulness (Sermon on the Nativity of the Lord). Memory can be cured by a constant remembrance of God, consolidated by the action of prayer, for it is thus imbued with the spirit and is carried from the natural to a supernatural state. It is by memory that the soul embraces God without any sense of weariness.

-Remembrance of God is higher than all other works, as the love of God, it stands at the head of all virtues.

-For William of St. Thierry, understanding memory in the Augustinian sense of faculty rather than act, the memory is the site of the soul's communion with God. When the memory is filled with God, then joy, grace, & love flood the soul, understanding & love are activated, and temptation & infidelity are kept at bay.

-The very act of memory is already an act of love, the desire to make present the absent Object of one's affection. Love is kindled again when it remembers the One whom it loves so exclusively, and the great desire of the one who so remembers is itself a loving prayer.

-Thus, through mindfulness, we become in fact what we are already in nature. Our labor to reform our lives by cooperating with grace & by raising our mind to God gradually effects a change in what we are. We retain our capacity for sin, but even our falling seems to serve our growth through the depth of our repentance and the humbled sense of our own unworthiness. We are not quite the "New Man," but we are moving in that direction.

-At such a stage of growth, mindfulness of God is almost a habitual thing. It is like the sap that keeps a tree supple. Most of the time it does not seem to be a distinct thing in itself; it appears more as a hidden factor which changed the quality of what is done.

-Actions performed in mindfulness somehow have the power to produce a disproportionate effect on the recipient. Example, a cup of cold water given in mindfulness of God becomes a torrent of salvation which cleanses & carries with it both giver & receiver.

-There is unity of inner actuality & outer behavior which renders actions translucent. St. Benedict is aware that the memory of God will be eroded during the day unless it is especially cultivated on a fairly basis.

-We shall scarcely find any one practice of piety which contains such a number, such a variety, & such a frequency of acts of virtue as this Holy exercise of the divine presence. If we are an interior disciples of Christ, all things that present themselves before us will help us to be mindful of Him, and to love Him as present everywhere.

-Thus we have to exert ourselves that we may ever enjoy the divine presence, that we may everywhere live before Him. If we love Him, we will find our delight

in walking before Him, in enjoying His presence. Without the practice of the divine presence, solitude is wont to be dangerous, the intercourse of men hurtful; but, by the use of it, both are helpful and be made holy.

-If we let the memory of Our Lord Jesus combine with our breathing then we know the profit of silence. It is more essential to remember God than to breathe.

Modern Man's Search For God

-Men of other generations went to God from the order in the universe; the modern man goes to God through the disorder in himself. The modern soul no longer looks to find God in nature. In other generations, man, gazing out on the vastness of creation, the beauty of the skies, and the order of the planets, deduced the power, the beauty, and the wisdom of the God Who created and sustained the world. But the modern man, unfortunately, is cut off from that approach by several obstacles: he is impressed less with the order of nature than he is with the disorder of his own mind; the atomic bomb has destroyed his awe of nature; and, finally, the science of nature is too impersonal for this self-centered creature.

-This change in our times does not mean that the modern soul has given up the search for God, but only that it has abandoned the more rational, and even more normal way, of finding Him.

-Not the order in the cosmos, but the disorder in himself; not the visible things of the world, but the invisible frustrations, complexes, and anxieties of his own personality, these are the modern man's starting point when he turns questioningly toward religion.

-Formerly, man, lived in a three-dimensional universe where, from an earth he inhabited with his neighbors, he looked forth to heaven above and to hell below. Forgetting God, man's vision has lately been reduced to a single dimension, namely, that of his own mind.

-Where can the soul go, now that a road block has been thrown up against every external outlet? Like a city which has had all its outer ramparts seized, man must retreat inside himself. As a body of water that is blocked turns back upon itself, collecting scum, refuse, and silt, so the modern man – which has none of the goals or channels of the Christian – backs upon itself and in that choked condition collects all the subrational, instinctive, dark, unconscious sediment which would never have accumulated had there been the normal exits of normal times. Man now finds that he is locked up within himself, he is his own prisoner. Jailed by self, he now attempts to compensate for the loss of the three-dimensional universe of faith by analyzing his mind.

-The modern man is characterized by three alienations: he is divided from himself, from his fellow man, and from his God. These are the same characteristics of the frustrated youth in the land of the Gerasenes.

-The **first** of these is self-estrangement. The modern man is no longer a unity. He is so dissociated, so alienated from himself that he sees himself less as a personality than as a battlefield where a civil war rages between a thousand and one conflicting loyalties. There is no single over-all purpose in his life. He may be likened to a radio that is tuned in to several stations; instead of getting any one clearly, it receives only an annoying static.

-The **second** characteristic of modern man is his isolation from his fellow men. This characteristic is revealed not only by the two world wars within a span of twenty-one years and a constant threat of a third; not only by the growth of class conflict and selfishness wherein each man seeks his own; but also by man's break with tradition and the accumulated heritage of the centuries.

-Nothing is more tragic in an individual who once was wise than to lose his memory, and nothing is more tragic to a civilization than the loss of its tradition.

-The modern soul which cannot live with itself cannot live with its fellow men. A man who is not at peace with himself will not be at peace with his neighbor. World wars are nothing but macrocosmic signs of the psychic wars waging inside microcosmic muddled souls. If there had not already been battles in millions of hearts, there would be none on the battlefield of the world.

-Given a soul alienated from self, lawlessness follows. A soul with a fight inside itself will soon have a fight outside itself with others. "What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you?" says the letter of James, "Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war."

-Once a man ceases to be of service to his neighbor, he begins to be a burden to himself; it is only a step from refusing to live *with* others to refusing to live *for* others.

-**Finally**, modern man is estranged from God. Alienation from self and from one's fellow men has its roots in separation from God. Once the hub of the wheel, which is God, is lost, the spokes, which are men, fall apart. God seems very far away from the modern man: this is due, to a great extent, to his Godless behavior.

-Goodness always appears as a reproach to those who are not living right, and this reproach on the part of the sinner expresses itself in hatred and persecution. There is rarely a disrupted, frustrated soul, critical and envious of his neighbor, who is not at the same time an antireligious man.

-The organized atheism of the present hour is thus a projection of self-hatred; no man hates God without first hating himself. Persecution of religion is a sign of the indefensibility of the antireligious or atheistic attitude, for by the violence of hate it hopes to escape the irrationality of Godlessness. The final form of this hatred of religion is a wish to defy God and to maintain one's own evil in the face of His goodness and power.

-Does such a confused soul exist in the Gospel? Is modern psychology studying a different type of man from the one Our Divine Lord came to redeem? If we turn to St. Mark's gospel, we find that a young man in the land of the Gerasenes is described as having exactly the same three frustrations as the modern soul.

-He was self-estranged, for when Our Lord asked, "What is thy name?" the young man answered, "My name is Legion, for we are many" (Mk. 5:9). Notice the personality conflict and the confusion between "my" and "we are many." It is obvious that he is a problem to himself, a bewildered backwash of a thousand and one conflicting anxieties. For that reason he called himself "Legion." No divided personality is happy. The Gospel describes this unhappiness by saying that the young man was "crying and cutting himself with stones" (Mk. 5:5). The confused man is always sad; he is his own worst enemy, as he abuses the purpose of nature for his own destruction.

-The young man was also separated from his fellow men, for the Gospel describes him thus: "...And he was always day and night in the tombs and in the mountains..." (Mk 5:5). "He was a menace to other men, for he had been bound with fetters and chains, and he had rent the chains asunder and broken the fetters into pieces. And no one was able to control him..." (Mk. 4:4,5).

-Isolation is a peculiar quality of Godlessness, whose natural habitat is away from fellow men, among the tombs, in the region of death. There is no cement in sin; its nature is centrifugal, divisive and disruptive.

-He was separated from God, for when he saw the divine Savior, he shouted, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus the Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not" (Mk 5:7). That is to say, "What have we in common? Your presence is my destruction."

-It is an interesting psychological fact that the frustrated soul hates goodness and wants to be separated from it. Every sinner hides from God. The very first murderer said, "And I shall be hidden from thy face, and I shall be a vagabond and a fugitive on the earth" (Gen. 4:14)

-Modern man has locked himself in the prison of his own mind; and only God can let him out, as He let Peter out of his dungeon. All that man himself must do is to contribute the desire to get out. God will not fail; it is only our human desire that is weak. There is no reason for discouragement. It was the bleating lamb in the thickets, more than the flock in the peaceful pastures, which attracted the Savior's heart and helping hand.

-Modern anxiety is different from the anxiety of previous and more normal ages in two ways. In the previous generations men were anxious about their souls, but modern anxiety is principally concerned with the material world; the major worries of today are, wealth, power, lust, and social prestige. This overemphasis on the material world is not healthy; it has begotten a generation that is much more concerned about having belts to wear on a sea journey than about the cabin it will occupy and enjoy.

-The second characteristic of modern anxiety is that it is not a fear of objective, natural dangers, such as lightning, beasts, famine; it is subjective, a vague fear of what one believes would be dangerous if it happened. The danger that they fear is inside of them and therefore is abnormally real to them.

-It is important to inquire into the basic reason and ground of anxiety, according to man's present historical condition, of which the psychological is only one superficial manifestation. The philosophy of anxiety looks to the fact that man is a fallen being composed of body and soul. Standing midway between the animal and the angel, living in a finite world and aspiring toward the infinite, moving in time and seeking the eternal, he is pulled at one moment toward the pleasures of the body and at another moment to the joys of the spirit. He is in a constant state of suspension between matter and spirit.

-In every human being, there is a double law of gravitation, one pulling him to the earth, where he has his time of trial, and the other pulling him to God, where he has his happiness.

-The anxiety underlying all modern man's anxieties arises from his trying to be himself without God or from his trying to get beyond himself without God.

-Anxiety stems fundamentally from unregulated desires, from the creature wanting something that is unnecessary for him or contrary to his nature or positively harmful to his soul. Anxiety increases in direct ratio proportion as man departs from God. Every man in the world has an anxiety complex because he has the capacity to be either saint or sinner.

-When we see a monkey acting foolishly, we do not say to the monkey, "Do not act like a nut"; but when we see a man acting foolishly, we do say, "Do not act like a monkey." Because man is a spirit, as well as matter, he can descend to the level of beasts, though not so completely as to destroy the image of God in his soul.

-It is this possibility that makes the peculiar tragedy of man. Cows have no psychoses, and pigs have no neuroses, and chickens are not frustrated (unless these are artificially produced by man); neither would man be frustrated or have an anxiety complex if he were an animal made only for this world.

-Since the basic cause of man's anxiety is the possibility of being a saint or a sinner, it follows that there are only two alternatives for him. Man can either mount upward to the peak of eternity or else slip backward to the chasms of despair and frustration.

-Yet there are many who think there is yet another alternative, namely, that of indifference. They think that, just as bears hibernate for a season in a state of suspended animation, so they, too, can sleep through life without choosing to live for God or against Him. But hibernation is no escape; winter ends, and one is then forced to make a decision, indeed, the very choice of indifference itself is a decision.

-White fences do not remain white fences by having nothing done to them; they soon become black fences. Since there is a tendency in us that pulls us back to the animal, the mere fact that we do not resist it operates to our own destruction.

-By the mere fact that we do not go forward, we go backward. Not to progress is to regress. There are no plains in the spiritual life; we are either going uphill or coming down. The will must choose. And even though an "indifferent" soul does not positively reject the infinite, the infinite rejects it. The talents that are unused are taken away, and the Scripture tells that "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). It means that halfhearted commitment to the faith is nauseating to Christ.

-The Christian is always bound to have a great advantage over the indifferent modern pagan, simply because he knows where he is going, whereas the modern pagan knows nothing. The pagan must always be the pessimist, for he must always feel that this life is too short to give a man a chance, and the Christian will always be the optimist, for he knows that this life is long enough to

give man a chance for eternity. That is why the Christian can be joyful. That is why the pagan is sad and depressed.

-The modern mind dislikes the monotony of a life that is consecrated to a single purpose and a final end, and to escape it, often with his own hand, man shuffles off this mortal coil. This positive distaste for repetition so characteristic of our day alone explains the new, the constant demand for new thrills, new excitements, new psychologies, new religions, new morals, new gods, new everything to arouse the already jaded sensibilities and soul weighted down with world ennui (boredom).

-Instead of saying that those who are full of life hate monotony, we should say that those who are full of life find a positive thrill in monotony. To prove this point one can appeal to those who are essentially full of life and who, therefore, enjoy the thrill of monotony: namely, a child, God, and His Incarnate Son – Our Blessed Savior. There is necessarily bound to a thrill in working toward any goal or fixed purpose, and therein is the final reason of repetition. There, too, is the line of division between genuine Christianity and modern paganism.

-The Christian finds a thrill in repetition because he has a fixed goal; the modern pagan finds repetition monotonous because he has never decided for himself the purpose of living. The Christian has fixed his goal, namely, to make his life more and more Christ-like. His own nature is like a block of marble, and his will is the chisel. He looks out upon his model, Christ, and with the sharp points of his mortifying chisel, cuts away from his nature great huge chunks of cold selfishness, and then by finer and more delicate touches makes the great model appear forthwith, until finally only the brush of a hand is needed to give it its polished finish.

-There is no man living who has this Christian ideal who believes that repeated acts of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and love are tainted with what the modern mind would call monotony.

-Each new conquest of self is a new thrill, for each repeated acts brings closer and closer to that love we fall just short of in all love, eternal union with Our Lord and Savior.

-Sometimes, of course, it is not always easy to see just how much progress we are making toward our goal, but though we never see the progress, we never lose sight of the goal. Then we are very much like the tapestry workers, who work not from the front of the tapestry, but always from the back, keeping before their eyes the model of the work to be achieved. They go on drawing thread

after thread in a monotonous but thrilling way, never destined to see their completed work until the last thread has been drawn, and the tapestry is turned about to show them how well and how truly they have labored.

-Picture a child with a ball, and suppose that he is told that it is the only ball he will ever have to play with. The natural psychological reaction of the child will be to be fearful of playing too much with it, or bouncing it too often, or even pricking it full of pin holes, because he will never have another ball.

-But suppose that the child is told that perhaps next month, perhaps next week, perhaps even in five minutes, he will be given another ball, which will never wear out, which will always give joy and with which he will never tire of playing. The natural reaction of the child will be to take the first ball a little less seriously, and to begin playing with it joyously and happily, not even caring if someone does prick it full of pin holes, because he is very soon going to have another ball which will endure eternally.

-The child with one ball is the modern pagan who has only one ball in the sense that he has one sphere, one world, one life, one earth. He cannot enjoy the earth as much as he would like because he must always be fearful of the earth be taken away from him. He can never tolerate that any suffering or pain should ever come to his little ball, the earth, for it is the only ball that he will ever have to play with.

-The Christian, on the other hand, is the one who believes that some day, perhaps tomorrow, he will have another ball, another world, another sphere, another life. And so he can begin to play with this earth, enjoy its monotony, and even resigned to its pinpricks, for he know that very soon he is going to have the other ball, which is the other life that will never wear out nor become tiresome, because its life is the life of the eternal God, the beginning and the end of all that it.

-When, therefore, seized and suffused through and through with the Christian ideal of making Christ shine out in our lives; and when in the routine of Christian living, we have began our morning with a prayer and asked the Father's blessing on all our goings and comings during the day; and when we have broken our fast with the Eucharistic Lord at the altar, and knelt in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and gaze at the uplifted Host and the glowing chalice; and when we have sanctified the day by offering each deed in union with our Divine Master, and sanctified each trial by linking it with the Cross, and control unkind words and unjust criticisms out of love for Him who prayed for His enemies on the Cross; and when the day is done we again kneel in thanksgiving

and in humble gratitude to the Father of Light; and when after having done this day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year in a constant effort to make our life more Christ-like; and then we wonder just what other thing needs to be done to bring us just a step closer to the goal of everlasting peace and happiness, then we have to remember the lesson of the thrill of monotony, and "Do it again."

-The way we live has an influence on the way we think. This is not a denial of the intellectual factors in belief, but merely an attempt to emphasize a neglected element.

-Intellectual knowledge is not the "one thing necessary": not all the PH.D.'s are saints. It is easy to find truth; it is hard to face it, and harder still to follow it. Some psychologists and sociologists like to rap their knuckles at the door of truth about mankind, but they would run away if the door ever opened, showing man's contingency on God.

-The only people who ever arrive at a knowledge of God are those who, when the door is opened, accept that Truth and shoulder the responsibilities it brings. **It requires more courage than brains to learn to know God: God is the most obvious fact of human experience, but accepting Him is one of the most arduous.**

-Everyone wants good health, but not everyone believes in dieting or giving up things which are bad for the organism. In like manner, many have a vague aspiration for goodness without the will to implement it with sacrifice. The tens of thousands who in the past year have tried to give up smoking cigarettes, and then, after-four hours, saw their resolution go up in smoke, can testify how little the modern mind is prepared for any kind of real sacrifice or self-denial.

-It is not easy to "No" to oneself. That is why so many philosophers have erected a philosophy of life based on saying "Yes" to every impulse and desire while dignifying it with name of "self-expression." But the fact still remains that serious progress in every walk of life demands some form of restraint: the doctor, the lawyer, the athlete, the artist, the singer, the businessman must all learn to "scorn delight and live laborious days" if they are to attain their ideals.

-The expert in Oriental languages or archaeology cannot at the same time be a champion tennis player. In all walks of life, something must be sacrificed if something is to be gained; the mind is developed at the expense of the body, and the body at the expense of the mind.

-Religion, too, requires sacrifice; it is not a crutch, but a cross. It is not an escape; it is a burden; not a flight, but a response. One leans on a crutch, but a cross rests on us. A coward can use a crutch, but it takes a hero to embrace a cross.

-The cross is laid on the shoulders of our pride and envy, our lusts and our angers, until by its friction it wears them away, and thus brings us to the great abiding joys of life. Alcoholism is the crutch of a man who cannot live with his own conscience and no longer needs the drug.

-When the mother asked Our Lord that her two sons be placed at the right and left side of Him in His glory, she actually asked for two crutches. But Our Lord asked in return if they could drink of the chalice of self-forgetfulness and moral heroism.

-As snow is cold and yet warms and refreshes the earth, so afflictions and efforts at moral regeneration warm and perfect the soul. After a forest fire has raged furiously, it is discovered that the seed of some of the pine cones have been released by the heat; so too, taking up the cross has been the condition of making souls first happy and then saints.

-Every quest for pleasure is fundamentally a striving for the infinite. Every pleasure attracts us because we hope, by savoring it, to get a foretaste of something that will exceed it in intensity and joy.

-Our hunger for the infinite is never quieted; even those disillusioned by excess of pleasures have always kept in their imagination a hope of somewhere finding a truer source of satisfaction than any they have tried. Our search for the never-ending love is never ended, no one could really love anything unless he thought of it as eternal. Not everyone gives a name to this infinity toward he tends and for which he yearns, but it is what the rest of us call God.

-The knowledge of God without a perception of man's misery causes pride, and the knowledge of man's misery without a perception of God causes despair. Knowledge of Jesus Christ constitutes the middle course, because in Him we find both God and our own misery.

-You cannot keep God out; He has His own way of getting into the soul. There are two breaches in our wall; two cracks in our armor; two hidden entrances to the soul through which God can enter. These are so much a part of our nature that we cannot alter them: when God made us he built them, like trap doors, in our natures. Even when our intellects bar God's passage by the false

obstructions to belief that unsound thinking has erected, He is able to penetrate to us through the secret doors we have not known how to bolt.

-The **first** of these trap doors in the soul is the love of goodness. As we chase after every isolated tidbit that attracts us by its good, the soul is really in pursuit of pleasure, every love of a friend, every approval of a good child, every comparison of good and better, implies some goodness beyond all these good things, for none of them completely fills our hearts. Every lesser good we approve intimates our longing for utter goodness, for God. No one can love the good without implicitly loving goodness, and to the extent God creeps into the soul in its every wish and every joy.

-Because of this human predilection for what is good, no life is made up entirely of actions that are intrinsically wicked. The murderer savors true goodness of a good dinner; a thief responds to the virtue of a child; a gangster feeds soup to poor people out of honest generosity. Good deeds are mingled with evil deeds. No one is forever persecuting, sinning, blaspheming; sometimes a hardened sinner is engaged in planting a rose, nursing a sick friend, fixing a neighbor's tire. There are considerable hidden reserves of natural goodness in everyone; they live on stubbornly in company with his predominant passion, even if that is turned toward evil.

-Because there is something in us that escapes infection, we are never intrinsically wicked, never incurable, and never "impossible." These isolated acts of virtue are like a clean handle on a dirty bucket; with them, God can lift a soul to His Peace.

-The **second** trap door by which God enters a soul in flight from Him is by its ennui, its boredom, its satiety, its fed-up-ness, its loneliness, its melancholy, its despair. No matter how many evils we may have chosen, we have never exhausted the possibilities of choice – the human is still free – his power of choice is never exhausted. Every libido, every passion, every craving of the body is finite, carnal, and its craving, when satisfied, fail to content us. But in the life of the weary sensualist, there is still one choice that has never been made, one great chord that has not yet been struck. He has not tried the infinite.

-The rich man still asks: "What lack I yet to make me happy?" He knew, as all sensation seekers know, that gratifying every whim still leaves the deepest appetites unsatisfied. There is always still something to be had – something we need badly. We know, but we do not know everything; we love, but not forever. We eat, and we still hunger; we drink, and we still thirst: "The eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing" (Eccl. 1:8).

-Despite our efforts to find contentment in the temporal, we fail. For as the fish needs the water and the eye needs light, as the bird needs air and the grass needs earth, so the spiritual soul needs and infinite God.

-Because God, for Whom we were made, is left out of its reckoning, the soul feels an emptiness, a boredom with what it has, a yearning for what it has not. This ennui is the negative presence of God in the soul – just as sickness is the negative presence of health in the body, and hunger is the negative presence of food in the stomach; a lack in us points to the existence of something capable of filling it. Through this trap door of our emptiness, God enters. If we do not admit Him at first, He will intensify the dissatisfaction and the loneliness, until finally He is accepted as our soul's guest and its eternal host.

Monastic Exploration

-From the beginning of the Christian community, we see a special way of life being adopted by some men and women. Its outstanding feature is celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, or for love of Christ. The original word used to describe these people meant "solitary," and this referred to their choice of celibacy.

-Likewise in Greek the word monachos, with much the same meaning was used. This word came into English as "monk." The solitaries were noted for their assiduity at prayer, whether in the Church or at home.

-They had a place reserved for them in the Church, and certain offices of prayer at night and in the morning were unique to them. They interrupted their sleep in order to pray, and they fasted more frequently than others.

-If they were women they were called virgins or widows, and if they were men they were called ascetics. Ascetic literally means simply someone in training. An ascetic is a Christian who is totally committed to his vocation, and whose entire life and activity are dominated by the fact of his being a Christian.

-During the first 3 centuries the ascetics lived as part of the parish community. Sometimes they occupied a special place in the church, but in the beginning they did not live in community. Either they lived alone, or if they were young, with their parent at home.

-In the first half of the 4th cent., shortly before the persecutions temporarily abated, the ascetics began to leave the Christian communities in order to live in complete solitude. They withdrew to the desert or to the mountains.

-A Syrian document of the period calls them "mountain-dwellers," and this was to reprove the practice of living alone which was considered incompatible with the Christian's need to belong to a community where the liturgy could be celebrated.

-At Alexandria, the life of St. Anthony the Great, written by St. Athanasius, became one of the religious bestsellers of the era, and was regarded as the official eulogy of the solitary life.

-It was at this time that the title "monk" (monachos) was definitively adopted. It seems that its primitive meaning of celibate was forgotten and it was interpreted henceforth as solitary or alone. Others interpreted it as meaning "one" or

“unified” in the sense that a person who became a monk has succeeded in unifying his being, fragmented by sin.

-Not all monks were solitaries....From earliest times groups of ascetics lived in community. Without leaving the town or village they remained part of the local church.

-Even solitaries in the desert did not consider solitude an absolute. They always admitted disciples who came to put themselves under their direction.

-It was St. Pachomius who organized a coenobitic community on a larger scale, so that he has become to be regarded as the father of community life for monks. He worked out a life style which enabled men to pursue the absolute search for God in a community of brothers. Thus he became one of the founders of the way of life we call coenobitic – a life devoted to seeking God in a community.

-In other places the identity and inner dynamic of each form of life, communal & solitary, gradually emerged. Thus life in community was considered to be for beginners, while the life of the hermit was for the advanced. This was the case in Palestine and Mesopotamia. St. Benedict, in his Rule, gives permission for eremitical life after living a long time in community, when his virtues are already well tested. Hence, he is able to do battle against the devil single-handedly.

-For this reason, it is very questionable if an aspirant to a cenobitic life or a postulant will ask to become a hermit without first being tested.

-However, in Asia Minor St Basil and St. Gregory of Nyssa took a different line. They held that even the highest mystical experience is within the reach of every monk, whether he lives in community or is a hermit, provided he is ready to undergo the purification which the Holy Spirit would certainly demand on him.

-The identity of the monastic life gradually emerged from the ascetical movement in the church. The ascetics remained part of the local Church, but the monks withdrew into solitude.

-The degree of this solitude could vary considerably. At one end of the spectrum was the hermit or recluse, living in a remote desert. At the other end was the great monastery around which a city often can grow up. The separation here between the town and the monastery was only the enclosure wall, and sometimes this was much symbolic as real. Nevertheless it was carefully maintained.

-Not that all contact with the world was broken. The people of God came to the monastery and even though the monk did not seek this contact, he had to give them the encouragement and the help of his prayer. They came to the monk because they felt that the monk had the Word of God, and even though the monk might wish for solitude he had to dispense this word to God's people.

-But while he sought to be alone, the monk soon found himself with other like-minded men. Without his being aware of it, he will be formed by the spirit of the community which he joins.

-The monastic life was thought of as a living entity in which men would beget spiritual sons. Their words were seen as a true source of life for others, and they thus came to be called Abba (father) or Amma (mother). Their wise sayings were passed on to others, at first orally, and later in writing.

-Each of the brothers has a special word to say to others. It is communicated by a person's attentive presence to the others, or by the example he gives. In this way not only the abbot but every monk in the community guarantees the quality of the life to the newcomer. He needs this guarantee for he has left all things to come to the monastic life.

-In the early 6th century, St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547) finding life in the city little to his taste, left and went to live in solitude near Subiaco. He was inspired in large measure by the Rule of the Master. However, he has softened a rigidity in the Master's work. But above all he has centered the life of the monk on the person of Christ.

-He speaks of the love which the monk owes Christ; for instance, in RB 4, on Tool of Good Works, he says: "The love of Christ must come before all else." "Prefer nothing to the love of Christ."

-He may have used St. Pachomius but he certainly used St. Augustine. He highly esteemed the writings of John Cassian and the sayings of the Desert Fathers. In Ch. 73, he recommends his monks to read the works of St. Basil the Great.

-Special attention must be given to the virtue of discretion, which permeates the whole Rule. Today we call it discernment. This is neither natural caution nor prudent moderation, but a kind of insight which enables the superior/abbot to adjust the demands of the monastic life to the grace which is given either to the community as a whole or the individual monk.

-In RB 64:19 St. Benedict calls this disposition the mother of all virtues and urges it on the abbot. He is deeply convinced that everyone has his own gift from God, one in this way and another in that (RB 40:1)

-It is important to note that the Rule of St. Benedict was not immediately adopted by all monks. The universal acceptance of the Rule of St. Benedict was due to the influence of Charlemagne and his son Louis the Pious. At the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 817, the RB was made obligatory on all monks in the Empire.

-Within 2 centuries the RB has already made its impact and held the promise of the long history which lay ahead of it. But this history itself poses a problem. The RB was written for a particular locality on the beginning of the 6th century. What can it say to us – peoples so different to those of St. Benedict's day, living in places so different to his central Italy, and in cultures so far removed from his?

-When St. Benedict wrote his rule he was there in person to comment on it in his own words, to show through his example how it should be lived, and to demonstrate through his own government of the monastery how it should be used in practice. The monks had not only the letter of the Rule, but also the person of St. Benedict, on whom, as his biographer St. Gregory the Great says, "rested the spirit of all the just" (Dial. 8).

-The letter of the Rule contains life within itself, and this life can be awakened in the heart of the disciple who listens. Hence the importance of the very opening words of the Rule: "Listen carefully, my son, to the master's instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart. This is advice from a father who loves you; welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice."

-Our father St. Benedict was simply trying to take the Gospel as guide, which is how he established a school of the Lord's service, a school of love of God and neighbor.

-The heart of Benedictine spirituality consists in this: affective love for Christ which becomes effective through active participation in the Liturgy, assiduous lectio Divina, concrete fraternal communion and an integral conversation or form of monastic life.

-In other words, affective and effective Christocentrism: preferring nothing to His Person and His project. Liturgical celebration: for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity. Lectio divina: a loving dialogue with God who is love. Fraternal Communion: in order to be Church, the Body of Christ in the Spirit. Various observances: as embodiments, manifestations and proofs of charity.

-The Rule is like a treasure which can never be fully exploited. No single generation of monks can exhaust all its riches. Not only does it go back to St. Benedict and the Desert Fathers, but it is in a certain sense an element at the very heart of the Church, contributing to its full life, even though in a hidden and unseen fashion.

-Reforms succeed each other down the centuries, and none is ever quite the same as those preceding it. A reform is only a new re-reading of the text. This modern word "re-reading" describes well what happens as each generation of monks takes up the Rule anew.

The reform of Citeaux

-During the 11th century a number of reforms stirred the monastic world. One of the most successful was Cluny, which gave new life to the Benedictine family. But it was only one among many.

-This time also saw the emergence of several monastic Institutes which have lasted until our own day, such as the Camaldolese, the Carthusians, and the Cistercians. All these reforms had certain characteristics in common. Notable among these was a pronounced taste for solitude and an attempt to return to the Gospel.

The Spread of the Cistercians

-With the entry of St. Bernard to Citeaux in 1112 the new monastery soon experienced a period of extraordinary expansion. Foundations multiplied at an ever-increasing rate. In 1113 La Ferté was founded, in 1114 Pontigny, and in 1115 Clairvaux. A month later Morimond was founded in Germany. →

-By 1140 there were no less than 10 foundations a year. In 1150, this had increased to 20 foundations a year. At the time of St. Bernard's death in 1153 the Cistercian Order counted 339 houses.

-St. Stephen Harding was able to maintain unity and communion in the organization during this time of incredibly rapid growth. To achieve this he drew up a document: "Charter of Charity." It permeated with love.

-A new kind of organization between monasteries was based on the maintenance of links between mother-house and daughter-house.

-Each year also, all the abbots had to meet at Citeaux, the Mother of the Order, in order to discuss the observance which must be so regulated in every monastery that it reflected the way the rule was understood at Citeaux.

-This meeting was the General Chapter, an institution which inspired other religious orders, and which eventually became widespread in the Church.

On Monastic Obedience

-Pure obedience is to obey God simply, and or superior for the love of God. Ordinary obedience has three conditions: 1st, is to accept the thing which we are commanded to do, and to bend our will gently to it, loving to be commanded; for to have no one to command us is not the way to make us become truly obedient, any more than living alone in a desert is the way to become meek.

-John Cassian relates that when he was in the desert he sometimes became angry, and that when he took up a pen to write, and found it would not mark, he threw it away. Thus, he says, living alone is of no avail, since we carry our anger about with us. Virtue is something positive, not a mere absence of its contrary.

-The 2nd condition of obedience is promptitude, to which is oppose spiritual sloth or sadness; for it is seldom happens that a soul in sadness does a thing promptly & diligently. In theological language sloth is called spiritual sadness, and as such prevents us from yielding a brave & prompt obedience. We cannot pass over rivers more safely than in a ship or boat; so, too, we cannot make the voyage of life more securely than by means of obedience.

-The 3rd condition is perseverance, for is not enough to accept the command & execute it for a certain space of time, if we do not persevere in so doing, for it is this perseverance which wins the crown.

-Admirable examples of perseverance are to be found everywhere, but especially in the life of St. Pachomius. There have been monks who throughout their whole lives have, with incredible patience, persevered in doing only one kind of work; like the good Father Jonas, who, besides gardening, never did anything in his life but make mats, and who was so much accustomed to this occupation that he continued it with the light shut out (no glass in their windows or holes) while he prayed & meditated, the one occupation not interfering with the other; and at last they found him dead, his legs crossed and his mat stretched above the. He died what he had been doing all his life.

-It is an act of humility to go on all our lives doing from obedience one same and mean work tempted possibly to think that we are quite capable of greater things.

-This 3rd condition is the most difficult of all, on account of the levity & inconstancy of the human spirit, for at one moment we love to do a thing, and the next we will not even look at it. It would follow all the motions of our spirit, and if it were possible to do so without disedification or loss of due self-respect, we should see nothing but change: one moment we should wish to be in one condition, and the next we should seek another, so extravagant is this inconstancy of the human mind.

-But we must bring the strength of our first resolutions to bear upon this inconstancy, so as to arrest it, and so live on equable life amid diversities of our own feelings and of what happens around us.

-When we are tempted to disobedience, we must, in order to increase our love for obedience, represent to ourselves its excellence, beauty, and merit, as well as its utility, so as to encourage ourselves to hold firm. This applies, however, to souls not yet well grounded in obedience; but when it is only a question of simple disinclination and dislike of the thing we are commanded to do, we must just make an act of love then set to work.

-But not an act of sensible love, for such is not in our power, nor is it all necessary, but an act of reasonable love, springing from the higher part of our soul, for this is the duty of the true servants of God, and in no other way shall we make any progress.

-If we only cling to these little softness & spiritual sweetness, and we do not make our resolutions of God's service in our higher will, we shall never attain to true virtue or solid love.

-The most difficult kind of perseverance is that which is required for interior matters, for in those which are material & exterior it is tolerably easy. The reason of this is that it costs us so much to submit our understanding, which is the very last thing we give up; and yet it is absolutely necessary that we should bring our thoughts into control with regard to certain objects, so that when certain exercises or virtuous practices are marked out for us, we may persevere in them and make our mind accept them.

-It is not a failure in perseverance when we occasionally allow little interruptions in our obedience, provided that we do not abandon it altogether. Even though we may obey with repugnance, and almost as if forced by the obligation of our state, our obedience remains intact by virtue of our first resolution.

-When our affections depend on so many little things they are subject to a thousand disorders. We must pay no heed at all to dislikes or difficulties provided that in the higher region of our soul we cling always to our sovereign object.

-Obedience is so excellent a virtue that Our Lord condescended to direct the whole course of His life on earth by it. He tells us often that He came not to do is own will, but the will of His Father; and the Apostle says that He made Himself obedient unto death, even the death on the cross.

-He was pleased to add to the infinite merit of His perfect charity the infinite merit of a perfect obedience. Obedience takes precedence of charity, because obedience comes under justice, as it is better to pay our debts than to give lams; hence it is better to obey than to perform an act of charity of our own choice.

-The 2nd point of obedience is rather humility than obedience; for it is a certain flexibility of our own will in following that of others, and it is a most attractive virtue, which makes us prompt to turn our own will in any direction, and disposes us to do at all times the will of God. For example, if when we are going in one direction we meet a brother who tells us to go in another, the will of God for us is that we should do what he wishes than what we wish; but if we oppose our opinion to his, the will of God for him is that he should give way to us, and thus it is in all indifferent matters.

-If, however, it should happen that in this initial difference of opinion both would wish to give way, there must be no lingering over the discussion; it must quickly be decided which is the better & more reasonable thing to choose, and do it simply. Discretion must come in, for it would not be right to give up something of necessity in favor of some matters of indifference.

-Supposing, that a brother should ask us to do something, and that we, being taken by surprise, should show some repugnance to doing it, the brother must not take offense, nor even seem to notice it; neither must he beg us not to do what he had asked, for it is not in our power to prevent our color, our eyes, our behavior, from betraying the struggle going on within us, even while our reason consents to do the thing.

-Even if a brother may have absolutely refused to do a thing for us, or however much repugnance he may have shown, we must not hesitate to ask his services on another occasion, nor must we even be disedified by his imperfection; for at present we have to bear with him, and very soon he will have to bear with us – just now he dislikes doing the thing, and another times he will do it willingly. If,

however, we knew by experience that his was a disposition as yet incapable of acting in this manner, we would wait a while until he was more enlightened.

-We must all of us make allowance for one another's faults, and must not be at all put out when we come across them. If for a time we ourselves go on quietly without falling into any, another time will come when we shall find ourselves failing continually, and committing considerable imperfections.

-We must suffer with patience the delay in our perfection, while ever cheerfully doing what we can for our advancement therein.

-We must accustom ourselves to seek the attainment of our perfection by the usual paths, in tranquility of heart, doing all in our power to acquire virtues, by our fidelity in practicing each of them according to our condition & vocation, but we must be content to wait as regards sooner or later attaining the result of our aims, leaving that to divine Providence, which will not fail to console us as the appointed time, and even if that should not be till the hour of our death; we ought to be satisfied, so long as we fulfill our duty by ever doing all that depends on us, all that is in our power.

-We must be contented to know that we are doing our duty through those who are over us, not seeking for any satisfaction or knowledge of things in particular, but in firm reliance on the Providence of God in the midst of all the desolation, fears, gloom, and other crosses which it may please God to send us.

-Now, the means of acquiring this ready yielding to the will of others is to make very often in our prayers acts of indifference, and then to put them in practice when the occasion presents itself. For it is not enough to renounce ourselves before God; that is no greater matter, seeing that it is only done in imagination, but when it has to be done actually, and when having just given ourselves wholly to God, we come in contact with a fellow-creature who orders us about, that is quite a different thing, and it is then that we must show our courage.

-This gentleness & yielding to the will of our neighbor is a virtue of great price; it is the symbol of the prayer of union, for that form of prayer is nothing but the renouncing of ourselves in God; so, when the soul says with truth: "I have no longer any will but Thine, Lord!" she becomes entirely united to God. In like manner, the renunciation of our own will to do our neighbor's is true union with that neighbor; in all things acting for the love of God.

-If a great work is done with as much charity as the small one, doubtless the doer of it will obtain much greater merit & reward. In a word, it is charity which

gives price & value to all our works, so that all the good which we do must be done for the love of God, and the evil which we avoid must be avoided for the love of God.

-The good actions which we do, but not by any special command, and which cannot therefore derive from obedience, must acquire that merit through charity, although we can really do them all from obedience.

-There are 3 sorts of Pious Obedience:

-1st, is that which is common to all Christians – the obedience due to God and the Holy Church in the observance of their commandments; 2nd, is religious obedience, which is far higher value than the other, because it not only concerns itself with the commandments of God, but also with the observance of His Counsels.

-3rd, as being the most perfect. This is called a loving obedience, and it is of this that Our Lord gave us an example throughout the whole course of His life on earth. The Fathers ascribe to this kind of obedience many properties & qualities: it is prompt, it is persevering.

-It never regards the countenance of Superiors, but only their authority. It never desires to inquire into the reasons or motives of a superior, in ordering this or that to be done; being quite content to know that he has given the commands. It never inquires how it may carry out what is ordered, feeling certain that God, who inspired the command, will assuredly afford the power necessary to fulfill it. Loving obedience presupposes obedience to the commandments of God.

-Promptitude in obedience has always been recommended to Religious, as a necessary part of true obedience & perfect observance of vows made to God.

-It was the note fixed upon by Abraham's servant for knowing the maiden destined by God to be the bride of his master's son. He said to himself: "The maiden of whom I shall ask a draught of water, and who shall reply, 'I will not only give to you to drink, but I will also draw water for your camels,' will be the one who is worthy to be the bride of my master's son."

-While these thoughts were passing through his mind he saw afar off the beautiful Rebecca. The servant, seeing her so gracious & lovely as she stood by the well drawing water for her flock, put his question, and the maiden answered as he had expected. "Yes," she said, "and not only for you but also for your camels."

-Observe how prompt & gracious she was, she spared herself no trouble, but was most lavish of it, for no small amount of water must have been needed to give drink to so many camels as the envoy had with him.

-Certainly, obedience ungraciously rendered is not at all pleasing. There are some who obey, indeed, but so grudgingly and with so ill a grace that the merit of the virtue is greatly diminished.

-Charity & obedience are so closely united that they cannot possibly be separated. Love makes us obey promptly, for, however difficult the thing commanded may be, those who possess loving obedience undertake it lovingly.

-Obedience being a principal part of humility, which loves submission above all things, it follows that those who obey love the command given, and so as soon as they are aware of it, whether it be to their taste or not, they embrace it, caress it, and cherish it tenderly.

-An example of this prompt obedience is in the life of St. Pachomius. Among the monks of St. Pachomius there was one named Jonas, a man of great virtue & holiness, who had the care of the garden, in which was a fig tree bearing very fine figs.

-Now, this fig tree was a source of temptation to the young monks; every time they passed it, they stopped & looked for a while at the figs. St. Pachomius, having noticed this one day while in the garden, raised his eyes to the fig tree, and saw the devil at the top of it, looking down on the figs, as the monks were looking up to them.

-This great saint, who was less anxious to train his monks in entire mortification of the senses, than in interior mortification of the passions & inclinations, called Jonas and commanded him to cut down the fig tree without fail the following day.

-To this command Jonas replied: "Ah! Father, we must surely put up with these young men a little; they need some sort of recreation. It is not for myself that I want to save the tree!" To which St. Pachomius replied: "Well, my brother, you are not willing to obey promptly and with simplicity, but what will you say if the tree prove more obedient than you?"

-And so it turned out; the next day the tree was found withered up, and it never bore fruit again. Certainly poor Jonas spoke with the truth when he said that it

was not for his sake that he wished to save the fig tree, for it had been a matter of remark that, all the 75 years during which he had been both monk & gardener, he had never tasted any of the fruit in his garden, though he was very liberal of it as regard the brethren. He learned now, however, how excellent promptitude is in obedience.

-David only expressed a simple wish to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, and instantly three horsemen galloped off & penetrated through the ranks of the enemy in search of the water. They were exceedingly prompt in executing the desire of the king. Many great saints have proved themselves equally prompt in trying to carry out what seemed to them the wishes & desires of the kings of kings, Our Lord Himself.

-Another quality of obedience is perseverance. Now, this especially Our Lord has taught us. St. Paul affirms this in the words: 'Becoming obedient unto death; and to raise this obedience even higher, he adds – even to the death on the cross. In these words, even to death, is included the fact that Christ had been obedient throughout the whole course of His life.

-The good monk Jonas provides us with two lessons on the subject of perseverance, for although he did not obey the command which St. Pachomius gave him promptly, yet he was a monk of great perfection. From the time of his entering Religion until his death, he continued his work as gardener without any interruption – that is, during the whole 75 years of his life in the monastery. The other exercise in which he persevered all his life was making mats of rushes interwoven with palm leaves, and he was busy with this work at the very moment of his death.

-Obedience is of such great price that it is the companion of charity. These two virtues give value to all others, so that without them all others are absolutely worthless. If you have not these two virtues, you have none; if you have them, you have all the rest in sufficient abundance.

-If Religious do not obey they cannot have any virtue at all, because it is obedience especially which makes them Religious, that being the proper & peculiar virtue of Religion. Even if you are ready & eager to suffer martyrdom, that is nothing if you have no obedience.

-In the life of St. Pachomius one of his monks, having persevered all through his novitiate in the most exemplary humility & submission, came one day to St. Pachomius and told him in a transport of fervor that he had a longing for martyrdom. He said that he could never rest satisfied till the opportunity for

embracing it came to him and he humbly entreated the saint to pray to God for him that his desire might be fulfilled.

-St. Pachomis strove to moderate this desire, but the more he said, the more hotly did the young monk urge his petition. The St. addressed him, therefore, saying, "My son, it is far better to live in obedience, and to die daily to self by mortifying our own desires, than to suffer martyrdom in imagination.

-He who mortifies himself, dies a martyr's death as far as need be; it is a far greater martyrdom to persevere in obedience all through our life, than to die in a moment by a stroke of the sword. Live in peace, my son, calm your mind, and do not dwell on this desire."

-The monk, who felt assured that this desire was inspired by the Holy Spirit, abated nothing of his first ardor, but continued to urge St. Pachomius to pray for the fulfillment of his desire.

-In a short time news arrived which cheered him greatly. A certain Saracen, captain of a band of robbers, had come to a mountain adjoining the monastery. St. Pachomius, hearing of this, called the monk to him, saying, "Off with you, my son! The hour which you so desired has come. Go out at once to the mountain & cut wood."

-The monk, almost beside himself with joy, and little imagining what he was really going to do, went forth, singing the praises of God, and thanking Him for having deigned to give him this opportunity of dying for his love.

-The robbers, seeing him, made straight for him, laid hands on him, and threatened him. For a short time he was most valiant. "You are a dead man!" they cried. "I desire nothing better than to die for God," was his reply. The Saracens then dragged him to the place where their idol was, to make him adore it. When they found that he persisted in refusing to do this, they prepared to kill him.

-Alas! This poor monk, so valiant in imagination, when he saw the sword at his throat cried out: "I entreat you, do not kill me. I will do all that you desire. Take pity on me! I am still young; it would be a grievous thing to cut short my life so early."

-Finally, he adored their idol; and then these bad men, heaping scorn & derision upon him, beat him soundly and let him return to his monastery. Arriving there more dead than alive, pale and overwhelmed with grief & shame, he was met

by St. Pachomius, who said to him, "Well, my son, what is the matter? Why are you so dejected?" Then the poor monk, full of confusion & distress, because he was a proud man, and unable to bear the thought of his terrible sin, threw himself on his knees confessing his fault.

-St. Pachomius, desiring the brothers to pray for him, and making him ask pardon of God, restored him to his former state, and then gave him this good advice: "My son, remember that it is better to limit your desire to living according to the laws of the community, and to wish nothing but fidelity in the observance of the Rules, than to undertake, or be anxious to undertake, anything not included in them, and to foster great desires to do imaginary marvels; these only serve to inflate our hearts with pride, and to make us hold others in little esteem, fancying ourselves far superior to them. Ah, how much better it is for us to live under the shelter of holy obedience, than to withdraw ourselves from that safe shelter, seeking something which seems to us more perfect! If you had only been satisfied, as I told you, with mortifying yourself thoroughly in life, instead of wishing for nothing less than death, you would not have fallen as you have done. But courage! Remember henceforward that you must live in submission; and be assured that God has forgiven you." The young monk obeyed the counsel of the saint, and behaved himself with great humility all through his life.

-Obedience is not of less merit than charity. For to give a cup of water from charity merits heaven, Our Lord Himself says so; do as much from obedience, you will gain the same reward.

-The least little thing done from obedience is very pleasing to God. "But," you say, "what shall I gain by practicing this loving obedience with all its promptitude & perseverance?" They who practice this obedience will enjoy a continual tranquility of soul, and that most holy peace of Our Lord which surpasses all understanding; they will have no need to give an account of their actions, since all will have been done from obedience, both to the Rules and superiors.

-The truly obedient soul will like a child in the arms of a beloved mother, undisturbed whatever may happen to it; content to be carried on the right arm or on the left.

-Even if superiors should be ignorant, and because of their ignorance should lead their inferiors by rugged & dangerous paths, the inferiors, submitting themselves to all that is not manifestly sin, not against the commandments of God and of His holy Church, can never err.

-It is so important to remember that all our actions ought to be performed according to the dictates of our higher nature and never according to those of our senses and lower nature.

-No doubt we shall have more satisfaction, as far as our lower nature is concerned, in doing what a superior whom we like commands us to do, than in doing the bidding of another whom we do not like at all. But provided that we obey equally as regards the higher part of our nature, that is enough, and our obedience is worth more when we have less pleasure in yielding it, because then we prove that we obey for God, and not for our own pleasure.

-The professed are bound to be exact and mortified in virtue of their vows, and to be Religious it would not be enough to have made them if they did not continue to observe them. The Religious who think that after their profession they may relax in anything whatever, even after having lived a long time in Religion, are greatly mistaken.

-Sometimes when we go to speak to the superior we carry with us a heart so hard & dry, that it is incapable of being softened & refreshed by the waters of consolation. It is not easily touched by what the superior says; and although he may speak very well with regard to what we need, it does not seem so to us. Another time, when our heart is tender and well disposed, he may only say three or four words, much less useful for our perfection than the others were, and yet they console us. Why? Because our heart was disposed to receive consolation.

-We fancy that superiors have words of consolation always on their lips, and they can pour them easily into the hearts of any whom they are willing to console; but it is not so. They cannot, any more than other people, be at all times in the same humor. Happy, indeed, and blessed are those who can keep a serene and undisturbed heart amid all these varieties of moods & circumstance.

Christian Obedience

-Every person has been created in order to accomplish God's plan in his regard. This implies the need and the inner obligation to obey both God and those who have a right to command, i.e., those who have authority, insofar as this authority, this power to command, comes from God. Thus children obey their parents because the authority of the parent comes to them from God by the very nature of paternity. Married partners have a certain authority over each other's body, with the consequent necessity of obedience. Citizens also owe obedience to the legitimate government of their country; Catholics owe it to their bishop and to the Pope.

-Such acts of obedience consists in doing what another person decides should be done, because he has authority, that is, the right to command. This authority over our will must come, at least in an indirect way, from God.

-Now the exercise of authority and the nature of obedience depend on the end of the society in which they are exercised. Therefore, when authority and obedience are practiced within the Church (for example, between Christian spouses, between priests and bishops, between a monk and his abbot), an intimate relation to the mystery of Christ is added to human obedience in general.

-This specifically Christian obedience participates in the obedience of Christ to the Father, with all the communion and filial joy that this implies, and also with all the sorrow and suffering that obedience implied for Christ (cf. Heb. 5:8).

-All exercise of obedience and authority in the Church has for its sole purpose our entrance into salvific will of the Father and our obedience to the Spirit of Christ. So we can see that Christian obedience is radically distinct from the obedience of a pagan soldier. And the authority of an ecclesiastical superior is very different from that of a policeman.

The Vow of Obedience

-What does the vow add to this Christian obedience? It adds a most efficacious means of entering with more confidence, liberty, and firmness into the mystery of the saving will of the Father. By this vow we place ourselves in the most favorable possible situation for the spirit of obedience and service to increase in us, knowing that this is the way chosen by Christ for bringing us to our true destiny. The vow implies a totality of availability to this divine process, as Perfectae Caritatis says, "Through the profession of obedience, religious offer to God a total dedication of their own wills as a sacrifice of themselves; they thereby unite themselves with greater steadiness and security to the saving will of God....Thus did Christ Himself out of submission to the Father minister to the brethren and surrender His life as a ransom for many" (PC 14).

-A monastic community is subject to the demands of any human society and thus needs a visible head or guide to be a sign and an instrument of the spiritual thrust shared by the brothers. We accept the authority of this guide when we commit ourselves to the search of God in a specific community. The church's Magisterium, for its part, approves our choice and confers on the local superior a participation in its own mission of teaching men to carry out everything that Our Lord commanded (cf. Mt. 28:20). In this way monastic obedience becomes

obedience to the Church and in the Church, and we enter deeply in to the Father's plan of salvation.

-The formal reason for obedience and the direct object of our vow is the divine will, in the discernment of which the authority blessed by God as an expression and an instrument of fellowship in Christ plays the supreme role. We obey not because it is humanly secure, but because we enter into the great current of grace and truth that flows from God and returns to Him bearing all creation with it.

-The vow of obedience, lived in this vision of faith, purifies us from our own point of view, frees us of much narrowness, and lets us enter into the views and ways of God, which surpass us. Obedience is Christ who enters our life, who asks and demands our gift of self by means of persons who cross our path. These persons are men like ourselves. This frequently is hard for our human nature, but the Gospel has never been proposed to us as a comfortable way of life. It leads us to the Father by way of the cross.

Spirit of Monastic Obedience

-The meaning of the monk's obedience is deeply spiritual, the interior transformation worked by complete dedication to the will of Christ. This orientation of obedience is seen in the following saying of the Fathers:

"Abba Hyperchios said: The office of a monk is to obey. If he fulfills it, all that he asks in prayer will be granted to him, and he will stand with confidence before Christ crucified, because the Lord Himself arrives thus to His Cross, made obedient unto death.

-The monk obeys in order to unite himself with Christ. The task commanded is secondary. In our life there is much less need to judge the order or request in regard to its practical prudence. One obeys in order to serve and in order to enter thus into the plan of salvation. Once united to this divine plan, prayer springs forth spontaneously, "in spirit and in truth," and God will fulfill our desires.

-St. Benedict exposes this relation between obedience and conversion with great theological insight: "That you may return by the labor obedience to Him from whom you have departed by the sloth of obedience" (RB Prol. 2).

-The heart of original sin is the propensity to do our own will contrary to the will of God, the tendency to follow our own desires of the moment even when they bring us to the greatest evil. It is the inclination to judge as good that which attracts our self-love. But the way of conversion, the way of holiness, is the way of renunciation of self in order to love God more than ourselves, in order to love

not merely the small good of satisfaction of our own desires, but the great good, the universal and perfect good desired by God. In this universal good we find not merely satisfaction, but eternal peace and happiness through our union with the perfect good which is the loving design of God.

-According to RB 71, the monk obeys not only the superiors, but everyone. This obedience to all the brothers, the little acts of service and charity, work, the unperceived renunciation, everything has been already consecrated in baptism and is now offered to God by the vow of obedience. Such collaboration with others is the logical consequence of the spiritual childhood preached by Our Lord:

“I assure you that if you do not become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever makes himself like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:3-4).

-This is the real charism of obedience, which goes beyond and underneath a more sociological and humanly justifiable approach, in order to know Christ from within His own spiritual experience.

-This inner spirit of obedience is expressed, for example, in the docility which we give to the advice of a spiritual father, whether he be our canonical superior or not.

How Do we Grow in Obedience?

Here are some suggestions:

1. *Before all else, embrace obedience as a work.* We return to God “by the labor of obedience,” according to the Prologue of the Rule. It is hard, arduous, and demands sacrifice.
2. *Cultivate the life of faith.* This is the most important factor. Our obedience cannot develop without the spirit of faith. As you grow in faith, you grow in obedience and vice versa. He who is not faithful in obedience runs the risk of gradually losing his faith. The cornerstone of monastic obedience is the conviction that what the superior decides is what God wants at the present moment. “He who hears you, hears Me” (Lk. 10:16; RB 5,6, and 15). This in no way should eliminate dialogue but indicates the necessary inner spirit of both obedience and dialogue.
3. *Place the emphasis on humility.* Recognize the fact that disobedient always comes from pride, and that pride is the sin of Satan: “I will not serve. Better to be my own master in hell than to serve in heaven.” In reality, this is the complete perversion of liberty.
4. *Submit everything to the superior, to the Father Master, or to the confessor, until you know what you ought to do.*

5. *Try to enter into the mind of the superior.* Be attentive to the desires, which at times are not fully expressed, of others, especially of the superiors.
6. *Docility and flexibility in everything.* Try to do everything with enthusiasm and intelligence when the task brings with it many difficulties. This is very important in order to prepare us for the exterior and interior purifications that God is going to use in our sanctification. These purifications and difficulties can come from many sides and without warning. We have to be ready and animated with the love of Christ, in close union with the disposition of His Heart, as St. Paul describes in Phil. 2:5-15.

Dialogued Obedience

-Dialogued obedience is a way to obey better. The purpose of the exchange of opinions is not to create a democracy, but simply to discover God's will and to relate the common of the community and the Church to the spiritual good of the individual. *Dialogue presupposes the spirit of obedience*, otherwise it will not be dialogue but escapism and an expression of pride.

-The true meaning of the interchange of points of view between a superior and a subject has to be seen under the light of faith. Respect of persons always takes first place over a plan of action.

-Pope Paul VI expressed the nature of dialogued obedience with even more clarity in his encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*:

We desire to give to the interior relations of the Church the character of a dialogue among members of a body whose constitutive principle is charity. This does not do away with the exercise of the virtue of obedience, since the right order necessary in any well-constructed society, and above all, the hierarchic constitution of the Church require that, on the one hand, authority should be exercised according to its proper function and, on the other hand, there should be submission....By obedience, therefore, in the context of dialogue, we mean the exercise of authority in the full awareness of its being a service and ministry of truth and charity, and we mean the observance of Church regulations and respect for the government of legitimate superiors in a spirit of serene availability as becomes free and loving children (118-119).

-This is dialogued obedience! Authority's command and human dignity are united in the dynamism of total gift of self to the love of Christ. Compare these words of Pope Paul VI with the citation of RB 3 and 68. Not the many common elements such as: authority, submission, reverence, and serenity, ending in free and loving obedience:

Let the brothers, then, give their opinions with all submission and humility....If the brother sees that the weight of the command far exceeds his strength, he should suggest to the superior the causes of this impossibility with patience and respect, not with arrogance, resistance, or contradiction. But if after this suggestion, the superior persists in his opinion and command, let the brother hold for certain that this is to his advantage, and trusting in the help of God, let him obey for the sake of charity.

Qualities of Dialogue

-In the exercise of obedience and authority, the central point of convergence is a *common search for the will of God*. The quality of our obedience is proportional to the quality of our discernment of God's will. Thus obedience is very far from being a passive attitude, a kind of mutilation of personality. On the contrary, it presupposes an act of intelligence and a serious interior effort to cooperate with the plan action approved by the superior or the community. Obedience itself not only permits us to present respectful suggestions to the superior or to the community as a whole, but imposes on us the duty to do so.

-On a deeper level, the *interior effort* necessary to obey and cooperate with authority presupposes an interior life of union with God in prayer. *A man of prayer is the only person who can truly practice dialogued obedience*. Really, how can we speak about God's plan if we have not meditated on it and made it alive in our own soul? Without this quality of personal intimacy with Christ, dialogue will end up in a spirit of contradiction, escapism, and open disobedience.

-In practice, we can carry it out by:

1. Be faithful to the life of prayer, thus you will cultivate a living faith which will indicate to you when to be silent and when to dialogue.
2. When any brother asks something of you, listen, try to understand what he wants and grasp his point of view. The life of obedience requires much more intelligence than is generally supposed.
3. Do what the brother, the superior, or the community has requested, provided there is nothing that appears illogical in it or manifestly contradictory to other expressions of God's will. Do not accustom yourself always to suggest what seems better to you. This would betray a certain lack of interior freedom.
4. If there is something illogical in what has been asked of you, or something that very probably the superior has not taken into account, *tell it to him*. You can be certain that this interchange of points of view takes nothing from the value of your obedience. The important thing is to speak

briefly and to speak well, that is to say, with serenity, humility, clarity, and charity. In dialogue, our manner of speaking, our attitude, and spirit of cooperation frequently carry more weight than the ideas we try to express.

5. If the superior maintains his original request after some minutes of dialogue, try to make that act of faith and confidence to which St. Benedict exhorts in RB 68: "Let the brother hold firm certain that this is for his welfare, and trusting in the help of God, let him obey for the sake of charity."

6. We have every right and at times the duty to return at another time to the superior or to the community and to explain more fully the different points of views, but always with the quality of a dialogue between friends: affability, adaptation to the other, tranquility, and respect. Always be ready to change your opinion.

-For the sincere monk, it is inevitable that there be a certain tension between dialogued obedience and humility. But let us remember that the dialogue between the superior and the brother can very easily come to be a form of spiritual direction, that is to say, an expression of humility. Besides, the whole message of RB 68 is that you can exercise humility within dialogue, and that dialogue ends with the triumph of obedience.

On Morality

The Many Faces of Morality

- A human act is one which flows from the deliberate and free will of the human person, an act which is under the dominion and mastery of that person. Example, I sing a song, I write a letter. An act of man, on the other hand, proceeds from some impulse of nature but without deliberation and freedom; for example, I blink, I cough, I sneeze, I dream.

-Only those acts which are under the dominion or mastery of man are really human. What makes man master of his act is his reason and will. Right reason is a practical judgment of reason, issuing a general dictate that good is to be done and evil to be avoided; it is the proximate (very near; direct), immediate and general standard of right moral action. Only the human act can be called a moral act, that is, an act for which the person is responsible. Morality is never accidental.

-Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R., writing in the 20th century, reminds us that “the Church has defined as a dogma of faith that the children of Adam even after the fall are in possession of moral freedom of choice.”

-If a person is not free to choose between good and evil, right and wrong, there can be no such thing as love or sin or responsibility or crime or punishment. He deserves neither credit nor blame for what he does.

-Ignorance, passion, force, and fear could diminish a person's freedom or even take it away completely. The presence of force (and the fear it engenders) inhibits and at least prevents the clear thinking and free choosing that comprise a really human act. And also: temperament, the functioning of the endocrine glands, drugs, environment, mental disturbance, unconscious motivation, and the like.

-Some teachers and writers have insisted that the best way to teach morality is to explain the Ten Commandments. Others have opted for a treatment of the “Beatitudes” as found in the Gospels. Still others have explained Catholic moral teaching under the banner of the great Christian Virtues.

-If God calls each one of us by name to live a life of love, we can ask two questions: 1st, What is meant by a life of love? 2nd, How does one responds to God's call? The answer to these questions is at the heart of Christian morality.

-The answer is basically up to us. Our response could be positive and joyful or fearful and hesitant or even selfish and negative. The answer must come from within the depths of our hearts. But always, in all of our conscious behavior, we are in fact responding in one way or another.

-Christianity is not that mass of restrictions which the unbelievers imagines; on the contrary, it is peace, joy, life and love which, like the throbbing of nature in early springs, is ever being renewed.

God's plan for us

-God's law contains practical norms and concrete direction for us. St. Augustine described the Ten Commandments as "messengers from God." St. Alphonsus Liguori called them "expressions of God's will." Pope John XXIII referred them as "timeless guidelines for living."

-Far from frustrating our human nature, the commandments show us how to fulfill ourselves, how to become more completely human. While it is true that Our Lord went beyond the commandments in his teaching, it is also true that he began with them. Properly understood, the commandments help us fulfill the great law of love.

The Moral Teaching of Christ

-Christ's ongoing battle with the Pharisees was not about the value of the commandments but about their hypocritical and nit-picking attitudes towards the external of the law. To Our Lord Jesus the internal motive, "the heart," is of primary importance. External actions obviously have their own importance, but their morality must be judged according to the motivation from which they spring. Those who "do the right thing" but for wrong motives (such as human respect, public reputation) have not yet internalized the moral teaching of Christ.

-In stark contrast to the morality of the Pharisees, Our Lord taught a morality of the heart. As sparkling water emerges from deep springs, so true morality arises from the mind and will.

Love One Another

-Vatican Council II expresses it this way: Christian charity truly extends to all, without distinction of race, social condition or religion. It looks for neither gain nor gratitude.

-One of the obstacles to love is the spirit of unforgiveness which tends to express itself in the form of grudges (a feeling of deep-seated resentment or ill will) and

resentment (a feeling of annoyance or indignation). Resentments are like cancers of the soul. They fester and eat away one's happiness and peace of mind. Almost every self-help group insists that the individual start dealing with resentments as first step toward better mental & emotional health.

Taming of the Tongue

-Catholic moral theology has made labels for the ways in which one person can ruin the reputation of another. One way is called **detraction**; another way is called **calumny**.

-**Detraction** means making known, without a sufficient serious reason the hidden sins or failings of another. In detraction, what is said is true, but it is also secret or private. We retain our right to our good name until we forfeit it by some publicly known misdeed or crime. Until such time, we have the right to our reputation.

-**Calumny** means the ruining of another's reputation by lies. It goes beyond detraction and is morally more offensive.

-It is true that the damage done by detraction or calumny can frequently not be repaired, but a sincere conversion requires an effort to do what one can do to repair the consequences of one's irresponsible behavior. Just as it takes two to tango, it also takes two to have a slanderous conversation. By lending a willing ear to detraction and calumny we share in their sinfulness.

-While it is true that we may sometimes "get caught" in such conversations, it is also true that we ordinarily do not have to listen and are free either to change the subject of the conversation or walk away. In our more honest moments many of us would probably agree that our tongue is a "restless evil" and that most of our sins are sins of the tongue.

-Experience teaches us that we will not be able to gain control over our tongue unless we first gain control over our heart, for external actions proceed from deep within us. It is only by watching over our heart that we will ever be able to control our tongue.

-In a more positive way, we should use our gift of speech to build up rather than tear down, to compliment rather than criticize, to highlight good qualities rather than focus on bad qualities.

True Love of Self

-A poor self-image results from the feedback we receive from others. One theory of social psychology is called "the looking glass self," because it implies that we get our self-image from the reflection of other people.

-Some young people reject their faith in God or at least their practice of it in order to "get even" with the adult "authority figure" who have hurt them. Much of our anger, for example, aimed at ourselves rather than at others.

The Many Faces of Sin: Original And Personal

-Original sin means that each "descendant of Adam" is created without sanctifying grace and is subject to concupiscence (the inclination to sin) as well as the punishment of death. Yet at the same time the Church rejects the idea that human nature as such is corrupt. It is weak and inconstant but not completely incapable of good acts or free choices. Above all, fallen human nature is capable of receiving sanctifying grace (new life) through the death and resurrection of Christ.

-While original sin is the state of alienation from God into which all human beings are born, personal sin is a fundamental choice against God, a free and willing turning away from his love. It is "an offense against God," a free transgression of the law of God," "a failure to love God and others."

-Sin is a spirit of selfishness rooted in our hearts and wills which wages war against God's plan for our fulfillment. It is a sign of maturity to be able to accept our limitations and discover meaning in our failures.

Mortal And Venial Sin

-When our acts are so deranged that we turn away from our last end, namely God, to whom we should be united by charity, then the sin is mortal. Short of that, the sin is venial.

-Modern Theologians often refer to mortal sin as fundamental option or basic choice (primarily in the will).

3 Conditions for Mortal Sin:

1. The matter must be grave or serious: Vatican Council II condemned as a crime "every act of war" directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants. Pope Paul VI includes artificial contraception; the American bishops argued that racial discrimination is a destructive evil.

-The 2nd Vat. Council said: "In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church.

2. There must be sufficient reflection (full advertence or full knowledge). This knowledge or advertence implies the ability to evaluate and appreciate moral values such as love, justice, honesty, & truth.

3. There must be full consent of the will: Full consent of the will means that a person freely chooses to do what he or she knows is seriously evil even though he or she could stop from doing it. The point here is that if a person is not free, mortal sin is not possible.

-Venial sin is a less serious rejection of God's love. Though venial sin does not destroy God's love in us, nor does it turn us away from God in a fundamental way, it does lessen our love for God and others, it does make us less fervent in our commitment to Christ, and it does tend to "soften us up" for mortal sin.

Sin and Reconciliation

- John Cardinal Newman asserts that in the Catholic tradition, it is better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven and for the earth to fail than that one person should commit a deliberate sin.

-The inner meaning of sin is a faith conviction that grows only in atmosphere of deep reflection and prayer. According to Catholic teaching, sin is a personal tragedy.

-The term "social sin" is being used more and more these days to express the idea that sin exists in some of the structures of human communities. "Sinful structures" are not simply imperfect human organizations; rather, such structures involve a systematic abuse of the rights of certain groups and individuals. The sinfulness lies in the unjust way in which social relationships are organized. An extreme example is the institutionalized racial or ethnic segregation; a less striking example is the absence or inadequacy of minimum wage laws.

-Whenever we consider sin on the personal or social level, we see it as an estrangement, alienation, brokenness, & division.

-The sacrament of penance, which seems to have lost its appeal for many Catholics today, is still one of the Church's most beautiful sacraments. It expresses the tender compassion and mercy of Our Lord Jesus which he extends to all who responded to his call for conversion.

-The sacrament of penance is not a mere ritual repetition or psychological exercise but a serious striving to perfect the grace of baptism, so that, as we bear in our body the death of Our Lord Jesus, his life may be seen in us more clearly.

-Strictly speaking, the obligation to receive the Sacrament of penance holds only if a person is conscious of unconfessed mortal sin. Yet the more frequent reception of this sacrament, especially in the more relational way in which the new rite is carried out, is of great help in living the Christian life.

The Role of Conscience

- How do we bridge the gap between the great law of love on the one hand and our daily judgments and actions on the other? One way is through conscience.

-Catholic tradition describes conscience in a twofold way:

1. As absolutely fundamental in understanding the dignity of the human person in his or her relationship with God, and
2. As a practical moral guide in making judgments and decisions in daily life.

-Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths. It is an innate or inborn faculty by which we are able to know God's law which St. Paul says, is written in our hearts (Rom. 2:15). It is the seat not only of the emotions but also of thoughts and voluntary acts.

-Conscience judges on the basis of some previous moral knowledge or moral value which a person has made his or her own. This previous moral knowledge may come from a number of sources: for example, one's training at home ("Don't take what does not belong to you") or from the Bible ("You shall not steal").

-Conscience in itself is not the judge of what is right and wrong. Conscience is the act by which a person applies a general moral principle to his or her action here and now.

Should Conscience be Our Guide?

- The tradition of the Church would reply that it all depends on whether one's conscience is true or false. A true conscience is one that is rightly formed, one that is in accord with God's will and God's law. In other words, conscience needs to be guided, directed, & enlightened.

-The American bishops put it this way, "We must make decisions of conscience based on prayer, study, consultation, and an understanding of the teaching of the Church.

-A false conscience is one that is not in accord with God's will and God's law, but is based on a false understanding of these or on purely selfish interests. It comes about through the individual's own fault.

-Common sense requires that conscientious people be open and humble, ready to learn from the experience and insight of others, willing to acknowledge prejudices and even change their judgments in light of better instruction.

-We can look for the teaching of Our Lord and discern his will in Scripture, in prayer (where we grow in knowledge and love of Him and commitment to his service). In the events of human life & history (where Christ & his Spirit are at work). In the Church (where all these things converge).

-Progress in the development of conscience depends very much on attitudes. We are disposed to act either positively or negatively toward a person, group, object, situation, or value in accord with our attitudes.

4 Ways to mature in this area:

1. Learn to love the truth and respect the law of love (both are friends we cannot do without).
2. Develop the habit of thinking before acting (it takes serious thought to form a judgment).
3. Determine to base our decision on rightly ordered charity (we have to ask ourselves how these decisions affect our love of God, self, & others).
4. Expand our understanding and use of the gift of prudence (apply common sense to the situation at hand).

The Values of Truth and Honesty

-When Burt Lancaster, the famous actor, was a poor boy in New York City, he had the usual boyish cravings for cream puffs, Chocolates, and ice cream. A quarter looked big to him.

One day as he stood on a corner in front of a bank, he looked down and saw a \$20 bill lying in the gutter. It was the largest amount of money he had ever set eyes on and his heart fairly jumped for joy at his great discovery.

He leaned down, picked up the bill and put it in his pocket. He was thinking of the joy it would give his mother when he ran home with his prize. As he stood there dreaming of the delicious things he could now buy, an elderly lady approached him. He noticed how worried and upset she looked. "You didn't

see a \$20 bill, did you my boy?" She asked. And she explained how she had cashed a check for that amount at the bank to buy some articles that were badly needed for her family. She was in tears when she said, "I don't know what I'll do if I don't find it. I must have dropped it near here somewhere...."

Burt's finger closed on the bill; a picture flashed through his mind of the good things all that money could buy. He must have been strongly tempted to keep what he'd found even though he knew it would be wrong. Still, he could have said, "Sorry, lady, I didn't see your money."

Instead, he pulled out the bill. "You did lose it here, Ma'am. I found it." And he handed over the \$20 bill.

The look of joy on her tired, anxious face sent a warm glow to his heart. She thanked him and went away with a light step. Burt Lancaster recalled it as the happiest memory of his life.

-Emphasizing as we often do the tender kindness and compassion of Our Lord, we run the risk of forgetting his sterner side. We know how strongly he condemned the false religious views of the Pharisees. He had even stronger words of condemnation for those who deliberately twisted his words.

Two Dimensions to the notion of a lie:

1. When we express to another something contrary to what we believe to be true. It is speaking against our own interior convictions.
2. When we intend to deceive another person.

-A number of modern theologians make a sharp distinction concerning this intention to deceive. Their view is that one may say something false to someone who has no right to know the truth.

-Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R., explains it this way: "In recent times, a number of reputable Catholic theologians have distinguished a morally justifiable false utterance from lying. Almost all hold as chief reason and as clear condition that the other party has no right to receive the accurate information and there is no other way to conceal the truth although concealment is dutiful.

Example: If the secret police ask me where my mother, who has done no wrong, is hiding, I can tell them straight out that I don't know. Since their intentions are evil, they have no right to know the truth. When I speak false to them, I am not really lying.

To get back to the morality of lying, we can see that it is morally wrong for two reasons:

1. It is an abuse of the faculty of speech. The purpose of this faculty is to communicate our thoughts and ideas to others. By lying we pervert this faculty.
2. Lying tends to erode the trust and confidence that people have in one another. The fabric of society and community is fragile. It is held together by delicate threads of mutual trust & confidence. The less people can trust one another, the less harmony and peace exist in society and community.

-It was a custom among sailors to take little Maltese dogs or monkeys to amuse them on the voyage. Here is a tale of one who embarked with a monkey.

When they were off Cape Sunium near Greece, a fearful storm blew up. The ship capsized; all aboard, the monkey included, were thrown into the sea and had to swim for their lives. The monkey was seen by a dolphin, who mistook him for a man, lifted him out of the water, set him on his back and made for land. As they approached the town on the shore, the dolphin asked, "Are you an Athenian?" "Yes, indeed," the monkey lied, "I belong to one of the best families there."

"Then, of course, you know Peiraeus the harbor town," the dolphin said. "Oh, yes," the monkey assured him, thinking it to be the name of a man. "He is one of my closest friends."

Disgusted with such a monstrous lie, the dolphin plunged and the monkey was drowned.

The Subject of Secrets

-The subject of secrets has been of grave concern to moral theologians for centuries. Peaceful social or community living becomes difficult when a person's secrets easily become public knowledge.

-The keeping of secrets is an important moral duty of the follower of Christ. The secret may be defined as something known only to a certain person or persons and purposely kept from the knowledge of others. The possessor of a secret has a moral responsibility to conceal his or her knowledge of the secret.

Kinds of Secrets:

1. **Natural secret** → a matter which by its very nature calls for secrecy on the part of all who have knowledge of it. Example, Jack observes over a period of many months that his neighbor Joe, a pillar of the community, gets seriously drunk every weekend.

2. **Promised secret** → a matter which one has promised to keep secret after one has become aware of it. Though the matter may not of its very nature require secrecy, one gives his or her word that the matter will be kept secret.
3. **Entrusted secret** → a secret which one receives because of an agreement, either explicitly stated or implicitly understood that one will keep the secret. Example, "I will tell you a secret provided that you will not tell anybody else." "Yes, I agree to this condition."

-Finally, a unique kind of secrets is what the Catholic Church commonly refer as the **seal of confession**, that is, the secrecy demanded of the confessor in the sacrament of penance.

-At times one may, at times one must, reveal secrets. **Secrets may be revealed:**

1. To avert serious harm from the one who holds the secret;
2. To protect an innocent third party;
3. To safeguard the community from danger. The common good of the many must come before the individual's right to secrecy. Thus if I know that one person in an office, factory, or school is corrupting many individuals, I must reveal this matter to those in a position of authority to do something about it.

-In general, the obligation to keep any type of secret ends if the matter becomes public knowledge.

-In regard to the secret of confession, no reason whatever justifies the braking of it. The confessor must be willing to die rather than reveal the confessional secret. Canon Law reserves grave penalties for any confessor who would dare to do so.

Conclusion

-The final issue is whether we respond in our whole life in all our attitudes, decisions and actions, in a way that makes us witnesses to God's grace. To follow Christ faithfully demands unselfish love and genuine service of others. It requires the carrying of the cross and authentic self-discipline. It entails a daily conversion from evil and sin and a tireless search for reconciliation. Obviously, it cannot be done without the strengthening and healing and renewing grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus.

-If we envision a Christian morality in this perspective, then prayer holds an important place in our lives, because we see it as total openness and

listening to God in all the ways he decides to speak to us, inviting us and challenging us with the graced readiness to respond with all of our heart, our mind, our will, and all of our life.

-For us Christians, Christ is always the center, origin and purpose of our life. To live one's moral life as witness to Christ. We Christian are aware that we are, from the beginning, called from God and for God, and that we find our truthful existence in a total answer to God's grace.

On the Our Father

ST. AUGUSTINE	ORIGEN
<p style="text-align: center;">Our Father , who art in heaven</p> <p>-That is, among the saints and the just. God is not tied down to space or place.</p> <p>-Just as the sinner has been called earth, when to him it is said: "Earth thou art and unto earth thou shalt return;" so on the other hand, the just can be called heaven, for to the just it is said: "For the temple of God is holy, which you are."</p> <p>-Wherefore, if God dwells in His temple and the saints are the temple, the words who art in heaven are rightly said to be the equivalent of "Who are in the saints."</p> <p>-This equation is most appropriate one, indicating as it does that there is as much difference spiritually between a sinner and a saint as there is materially between heaven & earth.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Our Father in Heaven</p> <p>-We shall hesitate to offer this address to Him if we have not become genuine sons, lest we should somehow be guilty of the charge of impiety in addition to our sins.</p> <p>-Let our whole life be a constant prayer in which we say "Our Father in heaven," and let us keep our commonwealth in heaven, the throne of god, because the kingdom of God is established in all those who bear the image of the Man from heaven and have thus become heavenly.</p> <p>-His walking among the saints is just like His walking in the garden, since everyone who sins hides himself from God, flees His coming, and is removed from boldness. For this is how Cain went away from the presence of the God.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">(1st) Hallowed by Thy Name</p> <p>-His name is pronounced holy where it is mentioned with reverence and the fear of offending Him.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hallowed be Your Name</p> <p>-Now a name is a designation that sums up and describes the particular quality of the one named. For example, St. Paul has a certain quality all his own, both of soul by which he is what he is, and of mind by which he can contemplate certain things, and of body by which he is a certain way.</p> <p>-In the case of God, however, who is Himself unchangeable and always remains unaltered, there is always a single name, that, we may say,</p>

	<p>spoken of Him in Exodus, "I AM."</p> <p>-Just as the one who prays must understand what is being said here and must ask that the name of God be hallowed, so also in the Psalms it is said: "let us exalt His name together (Ps. 34:3)." The prophet commands us with all harmony in the same mind and will to attain to the true and lofty knowledge of the special character of God.</p>
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<p>(2nd) Thy Kingdom Come</p> <p>-Do not imply that God is not reigning now. But it may be said that with "Come" we should supply "upon the earth."</p> <p>-“Come,” then, must be taken to mean “May it be made manifest to men.” Just as light that is present is absent to the blind or to those who shut their eyes, so the kingdom of God, though it never departs from the earth, yet is absent to those who know nothing about it.</p>	<p>Your Kingdom Come</p> <p>-AThe kingdom of God is within us@ for the Word is very near, in our mouth and in our heart, then it is clear that the one who prays that the kingdom of God may come prays that the kingdom of God may spring up in him, bear fruit, and be rightly perfected.</p> <p>-Just as there is no partnership of righteousness and iniquity, no fellowship of light and darkness, and no agreement between Christ and Belial, so the kingdom of sin cannot coexist with the kingdom of God. If, therefore, we wish to be ruled by God, let not sin rule in any way in our bodies; and let us not obey its command, when it summons our soul to the work of the flesh and to what is alien to God.</p>
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<p>(3rd) Thy Will Be Done On Earth As It is In Heaven</p> <p>-“As Thy will is in the angels who are in heaven so that in every respect they remain close to Thee and fully enjoy</p>	<p>Your Will Be Done On Earth As In Heaven</p> <p>-“On earth as in heaven,” found only in Matthew, can be taken to apply to each one of the petitions, so that</p>
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Thee with no error bedimming their wisdom, no misery frustrating their blessedness, so may it be accomplished in Thy saints who are on earth and have been made from the earth as respect their body and, though they are to be taken up to be transformed and to dwell in heaven, are yet on earth."

-Heaven and earth, Just & sinners; Spirit & the flesh, or the Lord & the Church.

-There is also a reflection on this in the hymn of the angels: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." Thus when our good will has gone before us by following Him when He calls, the will of God is accomplished in us as it is in heavenly angels.

-To say Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven amounts to saying: "As the just so also may the sinners do Thy will, in order that they may be converted to Thee."

-The other acceptation is not absurd, nay, it is in perfect accordance with our faith and hope, namely, to take heaven and earth as signifying spirit & flesh. As the spirit does not resist God, following and doing His will, so also may the body not resist the spirit or soul, which is now harassed by the body's infirmities and is prone to fall in with the body's habits.

-Nor does this clash with truth, that we interpret Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven to mean "as in our Lord Jesus Christ Himself so also in the Church;" as in the husband who fulfilled the Father's will, so also in the woman espoused to Him. Heaven &

what we are commanded to say in the prayer is, "Hallowed be your name on earth as in heaven, your kingdom come on earth as in heaven, your will be done on earth as in heaven." For the name of God has been sanctified by those in heaven, and the kingdom of God has been established for them, and the will of God has been done by them. And all these things, while lacking to us on earth, can become ours if we fashion ourselves worthy of gaining God's hearing concerning all of them.

-Therefore, we may infer that through prayers He wishes to take His disciples as His fellow workers with the Father, so that like the things in heaven that had been subjected to truth and to the Word, He might correct the things on earth by the authority He received on earth as in heaven and might lead them to the blessed perfection of things subject to His power.

-“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This is because the Man corresponding to the savior received authority over the things in heaven as things belonging to the Only Begotten, so that he might share with Him, being mingled with His divinity and united with Him.

-Now the one who, though still on earth, has his commonwealth in heaven lays up treasure in heaven, has his heart in heaven, and bears the image of the Man from heaven, he is no longer on earth, not because of place but because of free will; nor is he of the world below, but that of heaven which is better than this worldly heaven. In just the same way

<p>earth, it is plain, are appropriately thought of as husband & wife, for the earth is fruitful from the heaven giving it fecundity.</p>	<p>the spirits of wickedness who live in heavenly places have their commonwealth on earth, and through the things they plot in wrestling against men, they lay up treasure on earth; they bear the image of the man of dust, who is the same as the first of the works of the Lord, created to be made sport with by the angels.</p>
	<p>And so they are not heavenly nor do they dwell in heavenly places because of their wicked disposition. -Rather, He commands the prayer because He wishes that everything "on earth," that is, the baser things and those allied with earthly things, should be made like the nobler things and those that have their commonwealth in heaven, that is, everything that has become "heaven." For the one who sins, wherever he may be, is "earth," and will be somehow with his kindred unless he repents.</p>
<p>(4th) Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread -"Daily bread" is said either of all that is necessary to sustain this life. It remains, therefore, that we should interpret "daily bread" as spiritual food, namely, the divine precepts which are to think over and put into practice each day. -And this food is now called "daily" as long as this temporal life goes on through days succeeding days departing.</p>	<p>Give Us Today Our Daily Bread -Since there are some who suppose that we are told to pray for corporeal bread, it is right to refute their false opinion and to establish the truth concerning "daily bread." It must be said to them: How can the One who says we must ask for heavenly and great things have us ask for bread to be given for our flesh, since that is not a heavenly thing nor is the request for it a great thing?</p>

<p>-As our body in this life namely, before the transformation that is to come, sensing its decline, renew itself by means of food, in like manner also the soul, since by reason of its temporal propensities it suffers wear & tear, so to speak, in its striving after God, is restored by the food of God's precepts.</p> <p>-Moreover, "Give us this day" was said to mean as long as it is called today, that is, in this temporal life.</p> <p>-If, however, a person chooses to take this sentence as referring also to food necessary to the body or to the sacrament of the Lord's Body, all three ought to be taken conjointly, that is to say, in the same breath we are to ask for our daily bread, both that which is <u>necessary for the body and the consecrated visible Bread and the invisible bread of the word of God.</u></p>	<p>-“My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” The true bread is He who nourishes the true Man, made in the image of God; and the one who has been nourished by it will come to be in the likeness of Him who created him. And what is more nourishing to the soul than the Word, or what is more honorable than the Wisdom of God to the mind that holds it? What more rightly corresponds to a rational nature than truth?</p> <p>-This is the “true food,” the “flesh” of Christ. The bread for which we should ask is spiritual. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the “being” in the same sense as the bread, so that just as corporeal bread distributed to the body of the person to be nourished goes into his being, so also “the living bread which come down from heaven” and is distributed to the mind and the soul gives a share in its own power to the person who provides himself from it.</p> <p>-Since the Word of God is immortal, it shares its own immortality with the one who eats it. The saints are able to partake of spiritual and rational food not only together with men but also with the more divine powers, either because it profits them or because it shows what great nourishment they have been empowered to get for themselves.</p> <p>-We are commanded to ask for bread appropriate to the age to come, in order that God may take it ahead of time and give it to us now n</p>
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	<p>God may take it ahead of time and give it to us now. As a result the bread that will be given tomorrow, so to speak, is given "today," since "today" refers to the present age and "tomorrow" to the one to come.</p>
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<p>(5th) Forgive Us Our Sins As We Forgive Those Who Sins Against Us</p> <p>-We are then convicted of acting contrary to this rule if we do not forgive those who ask pardon while at the same time we ourselves expect our most kind Father to forgive us when we ask His pardon.</p> <p>-It is impossible for one to say truthfully that he is praying for one whom he does not forgive.</p> <p>-Wherefore we must own that it is incumbent on us to forgive all sins which are committed against us if we wish our Father to forgive those that we commit.</p>	<p>Forgive Us Our Sins As We Forgive Our Debtors</p> <p>-Now concerning debts the Apostle says, "Pay everyone their debts, taxes to whom taxes are due, fear to whom fear are due, revenue to whom revenue, honor to whom honor. Be indebted to no one in anything, except to love one another." Therefore, we are indebted, since we have certain responsibilities not only in giving but also in gentle speech and in certain kind of disposition toward others. Since we are indebted in these ways, either we pay what is ordered by the divine Law by discharging in full or, if we do not pay them because we despise the wholesome Word, we remain in debt.</p> <p>-We are in debt to ourselves in respect of the things that concern us, to the body to use it not for the wasting away of its flesh through love of pleasure. And we are indebted also to the soul to apply great care to it and to take forethought about the sharpness of the mind and about our speech that it may be without sting, useful, and in no way idle.</p> <p>-And beyond all this, since we are the workmanship and fashioning of God,</p>
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	<p>we are indebted above all to preserve a certain disposition toward Him and a love from all our heart, from all our strength, and from all our mind. If we do not accomplish this successfully, we remain debtors of God, since we have sinned against the Lord. And in such circumstances who will pray for us? For "if a man in sinning sins against a man, they will pray for him. But if he sins against the Lord, who will pray for him?" As Eli says in 1Samuel (1Sam. 2:25). Moreover, since Christ bought us with His own blood, we are His debtors, just as every servant is a debtor for the amount of money given for him to the one who bought him. We also have a debt to the Holy Spirit, in whom we are sealed for the day of redemption. And we pay this debt when we do not grieve Him and do not bear fruits that grieve Him; these wq</p>
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	<p>grieve Him; these we avoid when He is present in us and gives life to our soul</p> <p>-Now when he is in debt someone either pays or refuses payment. And it is possible in our lifetime to pay, but it is also possible to refuse payment.</p> <p>-If we remember the debts we have not paid, we shall be gentler toward those liable to us who have not paid their debt. This will be especially so if we do not forget our transgressions against God and our speaking wickedness loftily whether through ignorance of the truth or through dissatisfaction with the circumstances that have come our way.</p>
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	<p>-But if we are unwilling to become gentler toward those liable to us, we shall experience what the man who refused to forgive his fellow servant a hundred denarii did. He had been previously forgiven according to the parable in the Gospel, and the master in anger made him pay what had been forgiven, saying to him, "You wicked and slothful servant, should you not have mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you? Throw him into prison till he pays his debt." And the Lord draws the moral, "So also the heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."</p>
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<p>(6th) Lead Us Not Into Temptation</p> <p>-God Himself does not, of course, lead us in this, but one whom He has left deserted of His aid He permits to be led by a most hidden economy and by his own deserts.</p> <p>-To be led into temptation is one thing; to be tempted is another thing. For without a trial no one can win approval, either self-approval.</p> <p>-To God who knows all things before they come to pass, we are known even before any temptation occurs.</p> <p>-The prayer is not that we be not tempted, but that we be not brought into temptation, just like a person who must undergo a trial by fire would not pray that he might not be touched by the fire, but that he might not be consumed by it.</p> <p>-Joseph therefore was tempted with</p>	<p>Lead Us Not Into Temptation</p> <p>-If the savior orders us to pray for things that are not impossible, it seems to me worth asking how we are commanded to pray not to enter into temptation, when the whole of men's life on earth is temptation.</p> <p>-We are in temptation by the very fact that we are on earth, surrounded by flesh that wars against the Spirit, the mind of which is hostile to God, since it can in no way submit to God's Law.</p> <p>-We learn from Job that the whole of human life on earth is temptation. He says, "Is not the life of men on earth a temptation?"</p> <p>-Paul wrote to the Corinthians not that they would not be tempted, but that God would favor them with not being tempted beyond their power. He</p>
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<p>the lure of adultery but he was not brought into temptation. Susanna was tempted but she, too, was not led or brought into temptation.</p> <p>-Therefore temptations come through Satan not by his power but with God's permission, either to punish men for their sins or in the plan of the Lord's mercy to put them on probation and trial.</p> <p>-Moreover, it makes a very great difference into what sort of temptation the individual falls.</p> <p>-There are temptations that are but human, I believe, when a person, though meaning well, yet through human frailty fails to live up to some resolve or becomes irritated with a brother in his zeal to correct him, going just a little beyond the limits set him by Christian composure.</p> <p>-We are led into temptation if they are such as we cannot endure.</p>	<p>says, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide a way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."</p> <p>-Therefore, let us pray to be delivered from temptation not by avoiding temptation (for that is impossible, especially for those on earth), but by not being defeated when we are tempted. Now I suppose that the person defeated in temptation enters into temptation, since he is caught fast in its meshes.</p> <p>-Now the use of temptation is something like this. What our soul has received escapes everyone's knowledge but God's - even our own. But it becomes evident through temptations, so that we no longer escape the knowledge of what we are like. And in knowing ourselves we are also conscious, if we are willing, of our own evils; and we give thanks for the good things that have been made evident to us through temptation. The temptations that come to us are meant to show us who we are or to make known the secret things in our hearts.</p>
	<p>-In Deuteronomy, "He humbled you and let hunger and fed you with manna...and He led you...in the wilderness...with its biting serpent and scorpion and thirst...so that...you might know what was in your heart" (Deut. 8:3).</p>

	<p>-Eve's easy deception and the unsoundness of her reasoning did not come about when she listened to the serpent and disobeyed God, but was in existence even before she was tested. And this was why the serpent approached her, since he perceived by his own subtle judgment her weakness.</p> <p>-Not even in the case of Cain did wickedness begin when he killed his brother. For even before that God, who knows the heart, had no regard for Cain and his sacrifice. But his evil was made evident when he slew Abel.</p> <p>-We should not have known the splendor of Joseph's continence, prepared so as not to be captive to any lust, if his mistress had not become enamored of him.</p>
<p>(7th) But Deliver Us From Evil</p> <p>-That we may also be delivered from the evil into which we have already been led. And when this has been accomplished, nothing will remain to inspire dread nor will any temptation at all have to be dread</p> <p>-With the utmost care we should shun what from the Lord's revelation we know we must avoid and that with a most intense devotion we strive after what from God's revelation we know we should strive after.</p>	<p>But Deliver Us From The Evil One</p> <p>-God delivers us from the Evil One not when the Enemy who wrestles against us has in no way attacked us through any of his crafts and any of the servants of his will, but when we are gaining the victory with courage by standing firm against what happens to us. This is how we have understood the verse "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, and He will deliver them out of them all" (Ps. 34:19).</p> <p>-God delivers us from affliction not when we are no longer in affliction, but when in our affliction we are not crushed because of God's help.</p> <p>-so Paul is right when he says, "We are afflicted in every way but not crushed" (2Cor. 4:8).</p>

Origen

-It does not seem to me out of place after these discussions to finish this treatise on prayer by speaking in an introductory way about the disposition and the posture one ought to have in praying, the place where one ought to pray, the direction in which one ought to look barring any chance circumstances, the suitable and special time for prayer, and anything similar. The question of disposition must be referred to the soul, that of the posture to the body.

-Paul describes the disposition and says that we must pray "without anger or quarreling"; and describes the posture by the phrase "lifting holy hands." He seems to me to have taken this from Psalms, where it calls "the lifting up of my hands an evening sacrifice." concerning place Paul says, "I desire that in every place the men should pray." Concerning direction, in the Wisdom of Solomon it says, "To make it known that one must rise before the sun to give you thanks, and must pray to you at the dawning of the light" (Wis. 16:28).

-Then, it seems to me that the person who is about to come to prayer should withdraw for a little and prepare himself, and so become more attentive and active for the whole of his prayer. He should cast away all temptation and troubling thoughts and remind himself so far as he is able of the Majesty whom he approaches, and that it is impious to approach Him carelessly, sluggishly, and disdainfully; and he should put away all extraneous things. This is how he should come to prayer, stretching out his soul, as it were, instead of his hands, straining his mind toward God instead of his eyes, raising his governing reason from the ground and standing it before the Lord of all instead of standing. All malice toward any of those who seem to have wronged him he should put away as far as any one wish God to put away His malice toward him, if he had wronged and sinned against many of his neighbors or had done anything whatever he was conscious of being against right reason.

-And although there are a great many different positions for the body, he should not doubt that the position with the hands outstretched and the eyes lifted up is to be preferred before all others, because it bears in prayer the image of characteristics befitting the soul and applies it to the body. I mean that this position must be preferred barring any chance circumstance. For under certain circumstances it is allowed to pray properly sometimes sitting down because of some disease of the feet that cannot be disregarded or even lying down because of fever or some such sickness. And because of circumstances, for example, if we are at sea or if affairs do not permit us to withdraw to offer the prayer that is owed, it is right to pray acting as though we were not doing it.

-And kneeling is necessary when someone is going to speak against his own sins before God, since he is making supplication for their healing and their forgiveness. We must understand that it symbolizes someone who has fallen down and become obedient, since Paul says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." And spiritual kneeling is called this because every single existing creature at the name of Jesus has fallen down before God and humbled himself to Him. The Apostle seems to me to indicate this by the phrase "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

-Now concerning the place, let it be known that every place is suitable for prayer if a person prays well. For "Ain every place you offer incense to me...says the Lord" (Mal. 1:11). But everyone may have a holy place set aside and chosen in his own house, if possible, for accomplishing his prayers in quiet and without distraction.

-And a place of prayer, the spot where believers assemble together, is likely to have something gracious to help us, since angelic powers are placed near the throngs of believer, as well as the powers of our Lord and Savior Himself, and the spirit of the saints.

-And if Paul, while still clothed in a body, supposed that he was taking part in Corinth by his own spirit, we must not reject the opinion that in the same way the blessed ones who have departed come to the churches in the spirit more quickly than someone who is still in the body. Therefore, let no one disdain prayers in the churches, since they have something exceptional from the person who assembles in them genuinely.

-Since there are four directions, north, south, east and west, who would not immediately acknowledge that it is perfectly clear we should make our prayers facing east, since this is symbolic expression of the soul's looking for the rising of the true Light.

-By nature the East is preferred over the other directions, and what is by nature must be ranked ahead of what is arbitrary. First, giving praise may be found in the following words from Ps. 104, "O Lord my God, how greatly are you magnified! You are clothed with praise and majesty, who cover yourself with light as with a garment, who stretch out the heaven like a curtain."

-And it is possible for anyone to collect more examples for himself and to see how frequently the topic of praise is found scattered in Scripture. As for thanksgiving, let me cite the example found in 2 Sam. Of David's proclamation after the promises made to him through Nathan. David is amazed at God's gifts

and thanks Him for them in these words, "Who am I, O Lord my God, and what is my house, that you have loved me thus far? And I was made little in your sight, my Lord, and you have spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come."

-An example of confession is, "My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness, I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning."

-An example of request is found in Ps. 28, "Take me not off with sinners, and do not destroy me with those who work injustice." And having begun with praise it is right to conclude the prayer by ending with praise, hymning and glorifying the Father of all through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever.

On Pain - Longanimity

-God has placed many good things in life, both in the natural order and in the supernatural and divine; but there are always some evils present with the good. Evils are inevitable in human life; God did not wish to remove them from the earth, and Christ did not will to make our life completely free of them.

-St. Augustine in his masterful ways, gives us the clue for understanding this plan, which at first sight seems incomprehensible. He says that God preferred to bring good out of evil rather than to prevent evil. And indeed it is worthy of divine wisdom, love, and power to be able to draw out of those dark depths some magnificent good.

-Our Lord, who came to transform all things, who elevates, sanctifies, and divinized them, did not wish to suppress evil, but gave us the divine secret of getting good out of it.

-Together with love that orders our heart and soul with respect to what is good, Our Lord has left us, as a precious inheritance on earth, pain: Christian, supernatural, Divine plan, the inseparable companion of love and the cause of many of its wonders.

-Pain marvelously cleanses; the Scriptures say that just as gold is purified in the crucible, so are souls purified in temptation and pain. The rich can satisfy their loneliness & longing in false ways, in quick fixes that avoid the necessary learning. In terms of soul work, we dare not get rid of the pain before we have learned what it has to teach us.

-Pain enlightens; there are things we do not comprehend unless we have suffered, because grief sheds some special celestial light over our spirit. Pain is the sap of all virtues; without it they cannot grow and reach their full maturity. Pain makes love pure and disinterested, makes us one with the beloved; there are no bonds comparable to the holy bonds of pain.

-Echoing St. Augustine, who says that virtue is order in love, we might say that virtue and perfection are order in pain. Even in the spiritual realm there are struggles. There are periods when the sky seems to grow dark on the road to perfection. There are hours of sorrow and desolation when bleakness surrounds our poor, afflicted soul and our heart is like a cold, heavy stone.

-There are two classes of afflictions that we must bear on earth: one comprises all that goes contrary to our wishes & our inclinations; the other consists in the desire for the good things that we lack. How painful is the waiting for some necessity or benefit desired for!

-There are two prerogatives which Our Lord places in our soul in order to strengthen us in our struggle: fortitude in suffering and the heavenly science of hope. Both are divine forms of approach to one same reality: pain.

-To fortitude and hope are added the two fruits of the Spirit: patience & longanimity, the personal consolations that are given to us so that we may find consolation and meaning in our suffering.

-With God's light we can penetrate the secret of pain, and succeed in glimpsing the profound and divine reason for these consolations. Pain, when we see it thus, is a marvelous thing. Pain consoles us, because it purifies us. We might imagine that gold, if it had intelligence, would feel a certain deep joy while burning in the crucible, knowing that it would come out purified.

-We have intelligence and we have received divine light in order to comprehend the mystery of pain. He whom we love is a God nailed to a cross. Pain makes us resemble Him. It is characteristic of love to have a tremendous desire to resemble the beloved.

-Happiness that comes from pain is perfect because it is purified. It is a happiness that nothing, that no one, can take away from us. It indicates the complete giving of ourselves, and is the mark of triumphant love.

-Patience is serenity in pain. Patience is love that suffers. God has suffered and we, too, have our share in human suffering whether we wish it or not. If we suffer through love, in union with God, we will suffer less and will gain merit. But if we reject the trial, we will suffer more, without gaining any merit.

-No one is exempted of suffering in this present life; however suffering or sorrow takes another meaning when it is seen in the eyes of God, that is, taken and accepted with faith in His goodness & mercy for us. Often when the first blow was heavy, the following brought calm & peace & loving gratitude.

-The sign whereby we may recognize that God is in us and that we are possessed by His love, is that we receive everything that hurt us, and causes us suffering, not only patiently but gratefully.

-Every person on earth is forced to wait. The farmer patiently waits for the germination of the seed, for shoots to come forth. At first they are small, weak, and tender, and he waits for them to grow little by little, to produce leaves and flowers and fruit. Then he waits for the slow maturing of the fruit until the happy moment of harvesting arrives.

-No matter what we seek, we go slowly to the attainment of it. Slowly is the Spirit formed in wisdom; slowly does man become rich (Henry Ford went bankrupt 5 times before he became successful); and slowly are hearts conquered.

-God is very slow, because He has all eternity; because He knows perfectly the part that time plays in human life. God is very slow: thousand of years passed in order that Christ Jesus, the Desired of the nations, might appear in the world. Souls are sanctified slowly. Only babies grow fast.

-Our human impatience sometimes does not tolerate this slowness; we would like our soul to be purified rapidly, our mind to be quickly illuminated with the light of God, a volcano of love to burst forth into our heart. But no, the law of life – of all life, the natural & the supernatural – is slowness. Time ripens the fruit in the field, and time ripens the fruits in the soul.

-The fruit of hope is longanimity (patience endurance of injuries; forbearance). This consists in knowing and even to find an intimate satisfaction, a secret delight, in the slowness of God. Souls so favored know that God will give them what He has promised. They understand that the action of God is slow because of the impatience of their desires, and despite that impatience they cleave steadfastly to His will. Therefore they find a secret joy in waiting & hoping, because God wants it so, because He gives the necessary time for the precious fruits of our soul to ripen.

-He leads us lovingly by the hand through difficult, winding pathways that ascend to the summit of perfection.

-The cloth of Christian life is woven with the golden thread of joys & sorrows, but in divine proportions. Our Lord has imposed some austere duties upon us, but He has also given us some heavenly comforts. Let us, then, heed the invitation of Our Lord Jesus: "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me."

-So we are invited to take the cross upon our shoulders and remember that it offers not only a deep pain but also a wondrous consolation, a heavenly light.

-No one is exempted of suffering in this present life; however suffering or sorrow takes another meaning when it is seen in the eyes of God, that is, taken and accepted with faith in His goodness & mercy for us. Often when the first blow was heavy, the following brought calm & peace & loving gratitude.

-God has suffered and we, too, have our share in human suffering whether we wish it or not. If we suffer through love, in union with God we will suffer less and will gain merit. But if we reject the trial, we will suffer more, without gaining any merit.

-In order to suffer in peace, it is enough to will truly all that Our Lord wills. Suffering becomes lovable, and hence also less burdensome, according to the degree of our love of Christ. When God sees a soul who loves Him greatly, He knows that soul can suffer much for Him, whereas one who loves Him little will suffer little. Love, then, is the measure of our ability to bear crosses, whether great or small.

-We should never think of acquiring virtue without suffering. A man glorified God in himself, not when he pays reverent homage to Him merely by words, but when, for the sake of God & his commandments, he endures with patience all sufferings and labors.

-The martyrs were even like us, with natures which shrank from suffering. They were patient under it because they look at the eternal recompense, and endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

-The example of Christ's suffering shows us that God does not despise the anguish of our human nature and that the highest Christian virtue can be content to overcome it without pretending to stifle it.

-Adversity is the touchstone of the soul, because it discovers the character of the virtue which it possesses. One act of thanksgiving when matters go wrong with us is worth a thousand thanks when things are agreeable to our inclination.

-The example of Our Lord Jesus & all His saints ought to encourage us under all trials to suffer with patience & even with joy. We shall soon begin to feel that it is sweet to tread in the steps of a God-man, and shall find that if we courageously take up our crosses, He will make them light by sharing the burden with us.

-Daily trials borne with patience strengthen the will for future difficulties. No one can endure trials unless he is convinced that the sufferings, in which he is prepared to share, may lead to something worth more than bodily comfort.

-Nothing that happens to us is contrary to the will of Providence, and everything that is sent us by God is for our good and the salvation of our soul. Even if it does not seem beneficial at the present moment, we shall understand later that it is willed by God, and not what we ourselves desires, that is useful to us. God sends us trials out of his mercy, so that after we have suffered these ordeals we may be crowned by Him.

-The darkness of trial is not evil, the dryness of the spirit is not sin, the confusion of the mind is not malice. These are invitations to patience & resignation, to the healing of the cross, admonitions to be humble and obedient to the will of the Father.

-The beauty & sublimity of a soul increase its capacity for sacrifices, and therefore the greatest of all souls had to take upon itself the greatest of all sacrifices. Sacrifice adorns & beautifies the soul, for it springs from love. It is a proof of love when we give up one thing for the sake of another, and the essence of sacrifice is the renunciation of one goal for the sake of a higher goal. We renounce our consolation when the honor & glory of God requires it, and with our lives that we may find Christ. Consolation dwells & is to be found on the heights of sacrifice. Purification & sacrifice go hand in hand in the history of the soul. They are two sides of the medal; two manifestations of the heart's striving towards God.

-Love of the more perfect spiritual life will stimulate us to sacrifice, so that we willingly enter the service of virtue, although this cost us blood & sweat & drudgery. But who would not be willing to pay this slender price, if by so doing we might attain life that is more perfect?

-The hope of future joy, a joy which no one can take from us, is enough to make present sacrifices acceptable. The most courageous thing we will ever do is to bear humbly the mystery of our own reality. That is everybody's greatest cross.

-It is good for us to be in tribulation, provided that we have God as our companion. Yes, it better to be afflicted with Him than without Him to reign, or to feast without Him, or without Him to be glorified. It is better for us to embrace God in tribulation, better to endure with Him the furnace of affliction, than without Him to enjoy even the bliss of paradise. For as the psalmist says, "For what have I in heaven but You, and apart from You I want nothing on earth."

-All the burdens we carry are not just ours. The sin that comes up in us is not just our sin, it is the sin of the world. The joy that comes up in us is not just our personal joy. It is the joy of all creation. All we can do is accept & give thanks.

-When the days are darkest the power and love of God is nearest. It is easy to praise the Lord for His mercy when He has acted in our favor. But it is in this darkness before the dawn that faith is required.

-Even as the stars shine brightest when the night is darkest, so God seems to speak the most burning words to the heart when everything seems to be darkness & dismal.

-One of the great mysteries of human life is the mystery of pain. Again and again we ask, "Why has this come to me?" Why physical sickness? Why handicaps? Why did that person die? Why must I bear this disappointment? There is the pain in our bodies, the pain in our minds, and the pain in our hearts. Why does it have to be that way, we wonder.

-We can better understand the pain in life if we will keep in mind several facts:

1. Every possible blessing is also a possible pain. For example, a father bought roller skates for his children. He remembers that he found great joy in skating and wanted his children to enjoy it too. However, when one puts on skates, he also greatly increases the possibility of falling and getting hurt.

-The father watched his children when they first tried to skate. They would fall on the hard concrete and it would hurt and sometimes they could cry. In that instance, would you say that the father caused their pain? In a sense he did; but by giving them skates he also increased the possibility of joy and happiness in their lives. By giving them skates he was allowing them to get hurt, but it certainly was not his will. It would have been very different if he had gone out and banged their heads against the concrete.

-Another example, a boy is killed in an automobile accident. When his father allowed him to drive the car he certainly did not intend that the boy be killed. The father might have said, "It is possible for one to be killed in an automobile accident. Therefore, because I love you I will not let you drive or even ride in a car." On the other hand, the father wanted the boy to have the advantage and pleasure of the car, and thus he permitted him to drive.

-God has provided for us wonderful things for our happiness. Take love, for example. Love brings life's greatest blessings but it also brings life's greatest pains. God gave men and women the capacity to love each other. They marry and are given in marriage. They build homes. Into their homes come children and then new love is born into their hearts. Then something happens to one they love and their hearts are broken. But that is just one of the prices they must pay for love.

-God gave us the capacity to dream, to hope, and to aspire. But sometimes we do not realize our dreams; our hopes are dashed to the ground; our fondest desires are thwarted. Then we know the pain of disappointment and frustration. On the other hand, we also have the possibility of knowing the thrill of victory. In order to have the possibility of one we must be willing to accept the possibility of the other.

-For instance, a team goes out on the basketball court to play a game. They give their best but they are beaten, and defeat is hard to bear. They could have avoided their defeat by not playing the game. But also they would have denied themselves the chance to win. If one plays the game, he must accept both the possibilities of winning and of losing.

-When we look at life closely we will see that life's possibilities come in pairs: goodness and evil, short and tall, strong and weak, hot and cold, black and white – and also, pain and pleasure. The existence of one carries with it the possibility of the other. If there were no pain, then there would be no pleasure in life either.

2. Pain and suffering in this life is one of the prices we must pay for belonging to the human family. It is part and parcel of the human condition. Again and again we ask, "Why do the innocent suffer?"

-We have set up a court system in our country. We have judges and juries, and if a person is accused of some crime, he is given a fair trial. If found guilty, he is punished in accordance with the extent of the crime. We use great care in our courts not to punish the guiltless. But in life it doesn't work out like that.

-Of course, we readily admit that sin brings suffering both here and in the hereafter, but it is also true that some who have suffered the most were innocent. For example, a father and a mother who have lived righteously and yet their son or daughter goes astray from the right path of life, and it breaks their hearts.

-Some of the finest saints are made to lie on beds of pain. Paul John Paul II suffered tremendously near the end of his life. Some of the most consecrated lives must bear burdens of great disappointment.

-But if we insist that God set up the world on an individual basis – allowing each one to suffer merely to the extent of his own wrong-doing – then we must also restrict all our joys to those we can bring upon ourselves. Look into your own life and see how much you enjoy which came through the efforts of others. Then ask if you would like to give up all those things.

-For example, you have an automobile. Could you make one by yourself? Then, even if you could, you would have to go out and dig an oil well for yourself and refine the oil into gasoline. Then you would have to build some roads to drive it on. You see, just in your own effort, an automobile is completely impossible. We use electricity. Would we be able to discover it, generate it, wire our buildings, make a light bulb, refrigerator, dish washing machine, and all other things we have if it were not of other people?

-Suppose you get sick? If you lived in an individual world, you could call no physician. There would be no hospital to which you could be carried and no nurse to give sympathetic care. The medicines which brilliant men have discovered would not be available to you. And when you died you would not even be buried. Isn't this terrible?

-We enjoy a multitude of blessings which we did not cause. And in the same way we suffer many pains that are not our fault. Sometimes people say, "What have I done to deserve this?" and often the answer is "Nothing." Neither you have done anything to deserve many of your blessings. It is all part of belonging to the great human family, or belonging to a body. If one member is honored, the rests share in the happiness, but if one member suffers, the rests suffer with. We suffer for the sins of each other.

-Now we come to a mystery. Why does seem to intervene for certain individuals and not for others. A charismatic nun prayed for certain people and have seen miraculous answers come. She prayed for a lady with a cancer and almost immediately her pain went way and it looks now as if a miracle has happened in her life. Yet, she prayed for others and it seemed to make no difference. Why one and not the other?

-In the Gospel of John there's a story of a man paralyzed for 38 years, He was laying down beside the pool called in Hebrew Bethzatha. There were also multitudes of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed. Why is it that he was the only one that was cured by Christ and not the others?

3. We may be sure that God is working with us to help us overcome the pain of body, mind, and heart in our lives. The psalmist put two wonderful statements together: "He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars, he gives to all their names" (Ps. 147: 3, 4). That is, the God of the universe is also the God of the person. Above all, he allows himself to be called Our Father.

-And God works with us in many different ways. Sometimes He works directly with the individual and takes away his pain. Sometimes He waits until the prayer can be answered for His entire family of children. If you are a parent, you doubtless have prayed that your child be saved from his nagging asthma. And now our hearts have been thrilled with the news that God seems to have answered that prayer for all the children. Maybe God was waiting for a man like Dr. Ferrer, through whom He could answer that prayer. Sometimes God answer our prayer, not by eliminating the pain, but by giving us the strength to bear it.

-A man went to North Carolina for a week. One afternoon he went to the beach and there he saw a scene of destruction. It was not long ago that a hurricane hit that beach and destroyed hundreds of houses. He saw many of them torn to pieces. But also he saw many homes that were left standing without harm. Some of the houses were built of flimsy and cheap material while others were built with strength enough to withstand the storm. The storm revealed the character of the houses.

-And this happens in life. The purpose of Christ was not to eliminate all the storms, the hardships & challenges of life. He did not come to teach people how to have a good time and to avoid trouble. He came to create character. To His disciples He said: "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John.16:33). And through His grace, we too, can overcome our worlds.

-A doctor tells of a story of a father who brought his little daughter to him. The child had cut her eyelid. The doctor needed to take some stitches but for some reason did not wish to use an anesthetic. He asked the little if she could keep from jumping & shouting when he used the needle. She answered, "I can, if Papa will hold my hand." And she did not flinch once.

-What good did holding her father's hand do? That did not lessen the number of stitches to be taken, neither did it lessen the pain. Yet, if her father had not been there it would have made all the difference in the world.

-That simple illustration suggests to us the experiences of thousands of God's children. There is a Father, strong, wise, and loving, into whose hands we can put our hands. Then, no matter how dark or painful the way, we can bear the pain without flinching and, even in the midst of the pain, we find peace and victory. And with the psalmist we can say: "Though I walk in the valley of darkness I fear no evil for you are with me..." (Ps. 22:4).

The Pallbearers of Destructive Conduct

-Just as a man does not arrive all at once at sanctity, so too he does not arrive at once at complete perversity. Inordinate love of self, when it becomes dominating, puts forth roots more and more deep, to be seen in certain souls which are on the road to perdition. Their voice often has a sharp and piercing sound. They close their eyes to the divine light which alone could illumine and deliver them.

-Abba Paphnutius in his conference "On Three Renunciation" pointed out that "The beauty or the ugliness of the soul increases in proportion to the condition of its virtues or vices. The color that it has picked up from these makes it either so splendid that it deserves to hear from the prophet: 'The king will desire your beauty,' or so black, foul, and ugly that it acknowledges its own foul wickedness itself and says: 'My wounds stink and are festering because of my foolishness'" (The Conference of Abba Paphnutius: On Three Renunciation). p. 128

-Vice is an evil habitude, that of acting contrary to right reason. It deforms man entirely in the conduct of his life, because it taints the will and inclines it to an evil end. Vice makes of a man not a bad painter, a bad sculptor, but a bad man, a deformed man. All vices have one root in common, namely, the disordered love of self, opposed to the love of good, and especially of the sovereign good which is God.

-This evil root tends to sink itself ever more deeply into the will, and from this root is born an evil tree. The trunk of this tree is egoism, of which the central and principal branch, the continuation of the trunk, is pride, of which the lateral branches are the concupiscence of the flesh and concupiscence of the eyes.

-From concupiscence of the flesh is born gluttony and luxury. From concupiscence of the eyes, that is, immoderate desire of external goods is born avarice, and then perfidy, fraud, cheating, and hardening of heart. From the pride of life are born, vainglory and ambition, disgust for spiritual things, forgetfulness of God, envy, anger, injuries to neighbor.

-Although these vices disturb the whole human race, nonetheless they do not assail everyone in the same way. In one person the spirit of fornication is dominant, in another wrath rides roughshod, in a third vainglory tyrannizes, and in still another pride holds sway. And although it is evident that we are all attacked by all of these, yet each suffer in different ways and manner.

-Therefore we must so join battle against them that everyone spies out the vice which he is particularly besieged and struggles chiefly against it, fixing all the care and attention of our mind on fighting it and keeping watch on it, brandishing the sighs of our heart and the many darts of our groans against it at every moment, employing the effort of our vigils and the meditations of our heart against it, pouring out the unceasing tears of our prayers to God, and insistently and continually demanding an end to the assault on us.

-For it is impossible for us to deserve to triumph over a passion before we had understood that we are not able to obtain victory in the struggle by our own diligence and our own effort, even though in order to be cleansed we must always be careful and attentive, day and night.

-When we find ourselves freed from it, we should once again and with similar intensity shine light on the hidden places of our heart, locate for ourselves whatever is still more horrible that we notice remaining, and move against it in particular with all the arms of the Holy Spirit. Thus, when we had consistently overcome more powerful foes, we will have a quick and easy victory over the ones that remain, because the mind too becomes stronger through a succession of triumphs, and subsequent struggles with weaker foes make for readier successes in the battle. Likewise, it is always the case that when the more powerful vices have been overthrown and are succeeded by weaker ones we shall obtain a perfect victory without hardship.

-We can do nothing against the vices without God's help, and that we should not be proud when we are victorious.

-The Lord likewise warns that we must not be proud of our victory over our vices, as He said through Moses: "Lest after you have eaten and are filled," He says, "have built beautiful houses and lived in them, have acquired cattle and flocks of sheep, an abundance of everything, of silver and gold, your heart be lifted up and you do not remember the Lord your God, who led you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and was your leader in the great terrible desert.

-We should be certain from experience and have learned from innumerable scriptural texts that we cannot conquer such great enemies by our own strength but only with the support of God's help, and that every day we must attribute to Him the sum of our victory. This is recalled thus by the Lord speaking through Moses: 'Do not say in your heart, when the Lord your God has destroyed them in your sight: Because of my righteousness the Lord has led me in to possess this land, while those nations were wiped out because of their sins. For it was not because of your righteous deeds and the uprightness of your heart that you

were led in to possess their land, but because they acted wickedly they were destroyed as you entered in.

-Therefore, we should not be puffed up with the success of the struggle and the victory and ascribe this to our own strength and wisdom, believing that we were able to obtain victory over evil spirits and carnal vices through our own efforts and application and free will. There is no doubt that we would never have been able to prevail over these if the Lord's help had not fortified and protected us.

-Some of these vices in the most wicked men have roots that are very deep, which manifest in their own sad manner the immensity of the soul. We know those words of St. Augustine, "Two loves have built two cities: the love of self extending to the scorn of God has made the city of Babylon, that is, the city of the world, the city of immorality, whereas the love of God even to the scorn of self has made the city of God."

-Not until a nobler, finer love is found can a man master his vices or overcome his mediocrity. In a complete conversion, souls which were formerly addicted to vice, like St. Augustine, no longer feel any desire for their old sins, but rather disgust. As the eye blinks at dust, so the soul now blinks at evil. Sin is not fought; it is rather no longer wanted.

-Love casts out sin as well as fear; the great tragedy of life is that so many persons have no one to love. As a man in love with a noble woman will give up all that displeases her, so a soul in love with God gives up all that might wound that Love.

-Abba Moses in his first conference pointed out that "just as the kingdom of the devil is gained by conniving at the vices, so the kingdom of God is possessed in purity of heart and spiritual knowledge by practicing the virtues. And where the kingdom of God is, there without a doubt eternal life, and where the kingdom of the devil is, there – it is not to be doubted – are death and hell" (John Cassian's Conferences, The First conference of Abba Moses). p. 52

-And Abba Paphnutius in his conference "On Three Renunciation" asserted that we should make every effort then, so that our inner man too may reject and dispose of all the wealth of the vices that we have accumulated in our former way of life. These are our own, always clinging to our body and soul, and unless they have been rejected and cut off while we are still in this body they will remain with us after our death. For just as the virtues and love itself, which is their source, that have been pursued in this world make the one who loves them beautiful and splendid even after the end of this life, so also the vices bring to their eternal dwelling the mind which has somehow been clouded and infected

by their dark shades (The Conference of Abba Paphnutius: On Three Renunciation). p. 128

-When our heart's chief concern has been directed to fighting against one passion in particular, so to speak, we shall pray more intently about it and be especially careful and assiduous in our supplication, so that we may be worthy to watch out for it more diligently and thus obtain a swift victory.

-**Pride** is too great admiration of oneself. The ultimate stage of pride is to make oneself his own law, his own judge, his own morality, his own god. The Evil Spirit first promised Eve: "You will be as gods." A man makes himself a god by the exaltation of his own will against God's Will; from this rebellion flows contempt of others' rights, excessive love of personal advancement, the desire to be in the spotlight, and intolerance of opinions that differ from our own.

-In the modern world, pride disguises itself under the prettier names of success and popularity. We are encouraged by quack psychologists to "trust ourselves" instead of trusting God. False confidence in the self is encouraged – although the only formula for a man's true contentment lies in his saying to God: "Thou alone art the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

Pride has seven evil fruits:

- a) boasting or self-glorification through one's own words;
 - b) love of publicity, which is conceit in what other people say;
 - c) hypocrisy, which is pretending to be what one is not;
 - d) hardheartedness, which is refusal to believe that any other opinion is better than one's own;
 - e) discord, or refusing to give up one's own will;
 - f) quarreling whenever others challenge the wishes of the ego;
 - g) and disobedience, or the refusal to submit one's ego to a lawful superior.
- Very often conceited people regard getting their own will as a more important than obtaining the thing which is withheld: it is the victory they value, not the spoils. That is why they will refuse to accept a gift that was not given to them at once when they first expressed their desire: they would rather punish the friend who did not instantly yield to them than have the object be withheld. In arguments they do not want to know the truth, but only to vindicate their own self-importance, to reaffirm one's own opinions.

-**Pride** is also consummated without any action on the body's part. **Lucifer's pride was conceived solely in mind and thought**, as the prophet mentions: 'You who said in your heart: 'I will go up to heaven, I will set my throne above the stars of God, I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' He had no one to provoke him to this pride. **It was in thought alone that**

his crime and his eternal ruin were perfectly achieved, especially inasmuch as there followed no works of the tyranny that he was striving for.

-One would only grow obdurate in pride if he indignantly rejected the humiliation, allowing himself to yield to murmurs and complaints (A Spiritual Directory for Religious). When the present arouses pride in you, recall the past to mind and you will check the foolish swelling of conceit (St. Basil).

-Through his pride, man introduced sin into the world, darkening his mind in the process. Through the humility of Christ light came pouring into the world, showing us truth itself, pure spotless. What man should first surrender to God is his mind, his intelligence (which is his highest faculty and the hardest one to give away), precisely that assent which he has been withholding from God.

-"Barriers in relationships are sometimes caused by pride, more often by weakness and fear of people" (Pope John Paul II). In all sin there is an appalling pride, because all sin is an arrogation to ourselves of the sovereignty of God.

-Though faith is a gift of God, and though God will give it to those that ask it, there is one very human obstacle why more minds do not receive it, and that is pride. Pride is the commonest sin of the modern mind, and yet the one of which the modern mind is never conscious. You have heard of people say: "I like drink too much," or "I am quick tempered," but did you ever hear anyone say: "I am conceited?"

-Pride is the exaltation of self as an absolute standard of truth, goodness, and morality. It judges everything by itself, and for that reason everyone else is a rival, particularly God. Pride makes it impossible to know God. If I know everything, then not even God can teach me anything. If I am filled with myself, then there is no place for God. Like the inns of Bethlehem, we say to the divine visitor: "There is no room."

-Pride is of two kinds: it is either the pride of omniscience or the pride of nescience. The pride of omniscience tries to convince your neighbor you know everything; the new pride of nescience tries to convince your neighbor that he knows nothing. The latter is the technique used by "sophomores" who prided themselves on the fact that man can know nothing. Hence, they doubt everything, and of this they are very sure. They seem to forget that the doubting of everything is impossible, for doubt is a shadow, and there can be no shadow without light.

-If pride is the great human obstacle to faith, it follows that, from the human side, the essential condition of receiving faith is humility. Humility is not an

underestimation of what we are, but the plain, unadulterated truth. A Man who is six feet tall is not humble if he says: "No, really, I am only five feet tall."

-People try to avoid the painful process of self-knowledge on the ground that it develops an "inferiority complex." Of all the towering nonsense in the modern world, nothing is greater than this dread of an inferiority complex – the roots of such a fear are always pride.

-After the self-knowledge has been completed in what is known as the examination of conscience, then the soul is ready for the Confession. Here it gathers up the bundle of sins and defects, prides and egotisms and lusts which constitutes the rubbish of its life and throws them onto the fire of Calvary, to have them burned and purged away.

-It is of the utmost importance that, in facing our defeats and failures, we shall never yield to discouragement; for discouragement, from a spiritual point of view, is the result of wounded self-love and is therefore a form of pride. So long as man is strong in his pride, God seems weak; so long as man believes himself to be a god, God seems scarcely to exist.

-Unless the skin is rotted from the seed, it can never spring forth to life – we, too, have to shed our skins of pride through suffering. Such blessings, masked as misfortunes, strike all level of men.

-One of the beautiful effects of Hope is that it relieves us of the morbid fear of failure. As pride diminishes in us, there is an accompanying relief from our old terror of humiliation through failure. Despair also vanishes as Hope is born of faith in God – for the cause of despair is pride.

-Just as the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom (Si 1:16), so pride is the beginning of all sin (Si 10:15); and just as the love of God is the perfection of wisdom, so despair is the consummation of all malice. And as the fear of God arises in us from knowledge of ourselves, and love of God from knowledge of God, so, conversely, pride arises from ignorance of ourselves, and despair from ignorance of God.

-Dr. James DeFrancis, studying St. Bernard, say that: "Prior to its first conversion, Bernard believes, the soul suffers not only from self ignorance, but also from a self-deception, a false self-knowledge born of pride, by which it imagines itself superior to others and therefore not in need of conversion or healing. It is precisely because he recognizes the seductive power of this self-deception that Bernard so frequently insists upon the soul's humbling recognition of its own sad disfigurement as the prerequisite for its return to God." Hence, it is obvious that

the soul descent into self-deception by way of pride and self-will and ascend to self-knowledge by way of humility and love.

-“Pride is the love of one’s own superiority.” Pride, understood as excessive self-love and the love of one’s own superiority, so swelled like a tumor in the hearts of humanity’s first parents, Adam and Eve, that they succumbed to self-deception.

-Human beings naturally and rightly desire happiness, but, by pride, attempt to seize that happiness through the assertion of their own wills against others and against God. Though created by God to find their happiness, their true exaltation, by that humble subjection to his will which is charity, human beings have from the beginning been tempted to grasp a certain false happiness by the exertion of their self-will.

-It is precisely this lie or falsehood to be the heart of self-deception human beings suffer when they succumb to the wishful thinking of pride. Pride is itself the home of evil, just as humility is contrariwise the home of goodness.

-By the false ascent of pride and self-will, one will grow progressively unlike Christ in his humility and love, and so descend into restless misery amidst a region of unlikeness.

-For instance, fashioned by God with unrivaled splendor and glory, Satan grew so pleased with his own beauty that he forgot the truth of his creation and aspired to rivalry with the Son of God, imaging himself an equal to the Most High with a kingdom of creatures to match that of his maker. In each of these primordial sins of pride, as in every subsequent sin of pride, lack of self-knowledge enabled self-deception, self-deception led to rash assertion of self-will, and rash assertion of self-will led to ruin.

-The vice of pride engenders not so much a sheer ignorance of self, but a false self-understanding which takes the place of true self-knowledge. Pride indeed originates in ignorance of self, but ultimately culminates in a false, and self-aggrandizing, self-knowledge.

-Ignorance of self breeds pride when our deceived and deceiving thoughts lie to us, convincing us that we are better than we truly are. For this is pride, the beginning of all sin, when we are greater in our own eyes than we are in the eyes of God, than we are in Truth.

-“Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 18:10). Christ’s words speak to the fundamental, paradoxical dynamics of pride and humility: those who would exalt themselves towards the heights of spiritual greatness will be humbled by their descent into eternal misery,

while those who would humbly condescend to the acknowledgement of their present misery will be exalted to the heights of spiritual greatness. In Benedict's phrase, "we descend by exaltation and ascend by humility."

-Two paradigmatic figures of humility's ascent and pride's descent, namely Christ and Satan. In the proud ascent of his primordial sin, Satan exalted himself to seize equality with God, but was consequently humbled by his descent into unending spiritual death and misery.

-Conversely, in the humble descent of his Incarnation, the Word-made-flesh, who did not deem equality with God something to be grasped, emptied himself to assume human misery that he might bind his fallen human creatures to himself and lead them by his Ascension to a share in his own divine life and blessedness.

-We are confronted with two opposed and inverted ways of life, the humble way of Christ which leads to divine life and blessedness, and the proud way of Satan which leads to spiritual death and misery. Our decision to embark on either path will turn on our self-knowledge, on our willingness or unwillingness to face the bitter truth of our fallen condition, to acknowledge honestly the disquieting reality of our self-imposed and inescapable slavery to sin, and the justice of our consequent consignment to eternal death.

-Should we accept and confess this truth about ourselves, we may be converted to Christ and be led by Christ along the way of humility and love which leads to contemplation, divine espousal, and the beatific vision of God. Should we obstinately refuse to see and admit the truth of our sinfulness and weakness, we will succumb to self-deception and embrace Satan's way of pride and self-will which leads to eternal blindness, misery, and condemnation.

-If the monk can discern these descending steps of pride in himself, if he can see how he himself has been guilty of the various stages of pride he will have no difficulty, in finding the corresponding, ascending steps of humility. Indeed the very act of recognizing and confessing one's own history of pride is already to begin ascending St. Benedict's steps of humility because this act of self-scrutiny and self-judgment unmask one's cherished self-delusions and compels one to face plainly the truth of one's own sinfulness and weakness.

-At the root of pride and the self-deception pride occasions is *love of one own excellence*, the passionate desire for one's superiority, the same misguided self-love that moved Adam and Eve to aspire to be gods on their own and now in consequence swells in the hearts of all their descendents.

-St. Bernard's steps of pride are arranged according to one further tripartite pattern, namely the threefold vice of 1 John 2:16, the lust of the flesh, the lust of

the eyes, and the pride of life. Though St. Bernard does not render this structuring principle explicit, it will become clear through a careful study of his steps and their relationships: his first six steps concern curiosity, or the lust of the eyes; his next four steps concern ambition, or the pride of life; and his final two steps concern concupiscence, or the lust of the flesh.

The First Step of Pride: Curiosity

-For Bernard, the beginning of all sin is pride and the beginning of all pride is curiosity. Étienne Gilson argued that, for Bernard, curiosity means "to be preoccupied with any kind of knowledge whatever which has no bearing on oneself from the standpoint of salvation" and that "If St. Bernard allots to this first degree of pride as much space as he gives to all the rest, that is precisely because, just as the *knowledge of self* gives birth to all the other degrees of humility up to the highest, so does curiosity engender all the remaining degrees of pride, down to the lowest."

-Gilson's comments are entirely correct, but should be complemented with two further points. First, if Bernard believes that curiosity gives rise to all the subsequent steps of pride, he also believes, as will be shown below, that curiosity gives rise to a self-deception which itself develops through each of these subsequent steps. So while it is true to say that curiosity distracts the monk from true self-knowledge, the knowledge which alone has bearing on oneself from the standpoint of self-knowledge, it is also true that curiosity prepares the monk to entertain, and ultimately accept as true, a proud false self-understanding which supplants the true self-knowledge born of humility.

-Since St. Benedict presents his twelfth step of humility as a passage from the interior to the exterior man, from the heart to the sensible body, St. Bernard inversely presents his twelfth step of pride as a passage from the exterior to the interior man, from the sensible body to the inner disposition of the heart. His readers will recognize a monk suffering from the inner disease of curiosity by certain exterior, visible symptoms.

-Shrewdly inverting St. Benedict's twelfth step of humility, St. Bernard writes: "The first step of pride is curiosity. You will recognize it by the following signs: if you see a monk whom you have previously regarded as exemplary now begin, wherever he stands, walks, or sits, to allow his eyes to wander, to hold his head up, and to keep his ears pricked, you can discern from these outward movements that the interior man has changed...from these strange movements of his body, you can tell he has caught some new disease in his soul: he neglects to consider himself and grows curious about others."

-On the other hand, St. Bernard also said that It is not always wrong for the monk to raise his eyes from the earth, provided he recalls the true knowledge of his

own sinful misery. If he raises his eyes humbly to heaven to seek God's aid in his own sinfulness and weakness, he does well. If, again, he lifts his eyes to see in his brother's heart the same misery he sees in his own, and therefore learns to help his brother in their shared weakness, he is to be commended, not condemned. Lifting his eyes in humility or mercy, the monk will not descend the first step of pride but rather ascend the first two steps of truth: "If, after considering the time, the place, and the reason, you lift your eyes to your own needs or those of your brother, not only do I not blame you, but I praise you highly!"

-In the lengthy, relentless, and penetrating cross-examination of the apostate angel, St Bernard discerns that Lucifer's delusional daring was born of nothing other than his false knowledge of himself and his false knowledge of his Creator. On account of his unparalleled resemblance to the Son of God, St. Bernard explains, that Satan before the fall enjoyed a share in the Son's divine foreknowledge.

-By this share in the divine foreknowledge, he foresaw that he would indeed one day rule over a kingdom of subservient creatures, namely those angels who would join his revolt and, later, the race of reprobate human beings, the sons and daughters of pride. Though he foresaw that by his rule over the reprobate he would, in a sense, rival the Most High, Satan could not, St. Bernard adds, foresee his future fall and descent into misery apart from God. Resuming his fictive dialogue, Bernard asks his subject, "I wonder, if in God's foreknowledge you foresaw your reign, why did you not also see your fall? If you did foresee it, what madness led you to desire to rule in such misery?"

-Consequently, having deceived himself as to the truth regarding both himself and God, Lucifer exalted his self-will over the will of God and seized equality with God, only to be cast forth by the just judgment of God from the stable peace of heaven to a life of restless misery apart from his Maker. In this supreme, primordial, and paradigmatic act of creaturely pride, Satan's false knowledge of himself and his Creator drove him to the contempt of both himself and God. Exalting himself against the divine will, he despised the Most High as the rightful Lord of all creation, greeted his Creator's lavish generosity with ingratitude, and condemned himself to wander eternally in misery apart from the God who created him and in whom alone he could find his true and lasting rest.

-Yet, in this same act of pride, Lucifer also revealed his false knowledge of and contempt for his fellow rational creatures, both angelic and human. For in aspiring to rival the Son's lordship and to claim for himself the creaturely worship rightly owed him, Satan came to regard his fellow angels, and likewise future human beings, as creatures made to serve and adore him rather than their Creator. In persuading some to join his vainglorious revolt, he moved them to

turn their hearts from God to himself, and so to share in his own eternity of proud misery.

-For St. Bernard, Satan could not see his fellow creatures as fellow citizens in the kingdom of heaven, but only as subservient subjects to be valued only insofar as they would mouth his praise and so feed his delusional self-understanding as the rival of the Most High. In St. Bernard's words, Lucifer preferred to "reign over others in misery rather than to be subject with others to God in happiness" and "to rule over the sons of darkness rather than to share the lot of the sons of light."

-In the second step of pride, *levitas animae* or instability of mind, Bernard shows how the monk who has allowed his sensitive and mental regard to pass from himself to others begins to see and judge his brothers through the lens of his newly revitalized *love of his own excellence*. As he glances curiously about from one brother to the next, he soon comes to regard some as his moral and spiritual superiors and others as his moral and spiritual inferiors. In his perceived superiors, he sees much that he envies, while in his perceived inferiors he finds much to ridicule. Consequently, as his undisciplined gaze flits from one monk to the next, from supposed inferior to supposed superior, his mind is by turns carried up on waves of proud self-conceit and then cast down into troughs of jealousy and bitter self-contempt.

-In the third step of pride, *inepta laetitia* or false joy, the curious and emotionally unstable monk restrains his curious gaze so that he might see only what he wants to see, only those sights and sounds that gratify his ever-growing love of his own superiority: "He restrains his curiosity from everything that reveals his own vileness or another's excellence that he might instead curiously note everything in which he seems to excel others and always hide from his gaze everything in which he excelled by another."

-According to St. Benedict's ninth step of humility, the monk should "restrain his tongue and remain silent, not speaking until he is asked a question." Not so the boastful monk of St. Bernard's fourth step of pride. As soon as he finds an opportunity to speak, this monk "brings forth from his treasury things old and new; his opinions spill forth, his wealth of words resound. He interrupts his questioners, he does not answer those who ask. He will ask the questions, he will provide the answers as he cuts off all who try to speak."

-Though he may indeed be able to edify his hearers with his learning, this is not his intention: "He is not concerned to teach you or to learn from you what he does not know, but only to ensure that you know how much he knows." Should the topic of conversation turn to religion, he is delighted to boast of his visions and dreams, to urge vigils, fasting, and prayer, and, St. Bernard quips, "to offer

interminable and vain lectures on patience, humility, and each of the other virtues."

-In the four steps of pride which follow the monk's *arrogance*, St. Bernard continues to trace implicitly the parallel between Lucifer's pride and that of the monk. For Bernard, Satan's self-deception and false understanding of his fellow creatures eventually led him to assert his self-will against the will of God, and to despise the rightful rule of his only superior, Christ the Most High. In the seventh to tenth steps of pride, likewise, St. Bernard shows how the proud monk's developing self-deception moves him to despise not only his brothers, but also his monastic superiors to whom, in Benedict's words, he owes "all obedience out of love for Christ."

-On St. Bernard's reading of the *Rule*, it is in the third step of humility, that one ascending this ladder enters the monastic enclosure for it is here that he submits in obedience to a superior. Conversely, St. Bernard suggests, it is in the tenth step of pride that the monk who has despised his brothers and scorned the rule of his superiors must be expelled from the monastic enclosure. Once more, the monk's pattern of descent imitates that of Lucifer. When Lucifer revolted against the rule of his Superior, Christ, and so violated the concord of the citizens of heaven, he was justly expelled from the paradise of heaven. In the same fashion, when the monk revolts against the rule of his superiors, and so disturbs the concord of the monastic community, he must eventually be compelled to leave the paradise of the cloister, either by his own decision or by that of his superiors.

-When human beings through curiosity, pride, and self-deception fell into misery, the Word of God followed the work of his hands, humbly willed to experience human misery, "not out of similar curiosity, but out of his marvelous charity." On account of that eternal mercy he has known from all eternity according to his divine nature, the Word who knew no misery willingly took upon himself the miseries of his fallen creatures that he might first experience that misery within his own, human heart, and then, through this experience, begin to discern and learn true, human *misericordia* for the sufferings he likewise saw and continues to see in his human brothers and sisters.

-In willing to learn and grow by experience in genuine human humility and compassion, Christ has not only made himself the model and source of fallen human beings' ascent to Truth, but has also made himself "attractive" to the very human beings he has come to deliver from their misery.

-St. Bernard believes that in consequence of their false ascent by pride, human beings have descended into a predominantly carnal condition. That is, fallen human beings are largely given over to a strongly emotional love of sensible, fleshly things. Consequently, Christ has assumed a fleshly, sensible form that by

the mysteries of his incarnate life, and most especially his Passion, he might so move the hearts of fallen human beings as to win their emotive, carnal love to himself.

-Pope St. Gregory the Great that "It is difficult to do great things and not to have in oneself some kind of self-confidence with regard to these great things. It is just because we struggle valiantly against our vices that thoughts of presumption arise in our hearts; although our minds courageously battle against our external faults, we secretly swell with pride within. We think we are already people of great virtue, not reckoning this thought of self-esteem to be a sin."

-He also pointed out that "Those who encourage others to do evil are explicitly called apostate angels, because they use enticing words to lead people toward unlawful actions as if out of love. They are much worse, though, who fall into this sin not out of fear but out of pride, and their archetype is blessed Job's wife, who tried to persuade her husband to commit the sin of pride: 'Are you still going to insist on your integrity? Curse God and die!' She blames her husband's integrity, that he despises everything transitory and desires with a pure heart only what is eternal. She might as well have said, 'Why do you simply desire eternal things and groan with resignation at your present distress? Go on, despise eternity and at least escape your present troubles by dying!'"

-Just as almighty God was able to create what is good out of nothing, so, when he willed it, through the mystery of His incarnation he also restored the good that was lost. He made two creatures that were to know him, namely, angels and humans. Pride ruined them both and cut them off from the inborn state of uprightness. One creature was covered with flesh, but the other had no weakness arising from the flesh. The angel, you see, was pure spirit, but the human being is spirit and flesh.

-The blindness of his act of pride weighs him down so heavily that he never again returns to those heavenly ranks of internal glory. Never again does he join the ranks of the dignitaries who stand about in the light, because the weight of his darkness always forces him down to the lowest regions. He remains an exile forever from that fraternity in the heavenly fatherland.

-With a person's senses given over to consent in guilt, many arguments of vain confidence followed, which nursed the soul born in sin with poisoned milk, comforting it with caressing excuses, so that it should not fear the bitter reward of death. And so the first man waxed brazen after his guilt and said, "The woman you gave me as a companion gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Led by fear, he had run away to hide himself. After he was found out, he made it clear how proud he was, even in fear. Obviously he feared immediate punishment for his sin; he did not love the face of God, which he had lost. Fear

arises from pride, not from humility. He who does not renounce sin when he can escape punishment is proud.

Avarice:

-The Lord Jesus, at one time, told a parable about a rich man whose land brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself: "What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?" and he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry." The Lord goes on to say: "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' Then the Lord concluded the parable by saying: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

-Certainly, it is true to say that greediness is a very dangerous vice. It is the mastermind of every economic crisis. Collapsed of the economy of a once prosperous country can be traced by this unrelentless vice. It drags down poorer countries to the dust. No wonder that the Lord warns us to beware of covetousness in all its form, for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

-The vice of greediness, too, is the architect of the corruption of discontent, for nothing is enough for a person of whom enough is too little. Thus the Lord warns, not to lay up treasures on earth where moth devours, rust consumes, and where thieves break in and steal, but to lay up treasures in heaven where no moth devours, no rust consumes, and where no thieves to break in and steal, because where our treasure is there our heart be also.

-Of course, laying up treasures in heaven, undoubtedly, doesn't mean that we should not care about our present life and are to care only about the next life. After all, in the Lord's Prayer, Christ teaches us to pray for God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. We are praying for glimpses of heaven to be known in the life we presently live. Consequently, this leads us to the issue of happiness.

-St. Thomas Aquinas said that "all people agree in seeking happiness, but disagree as to where it is to be found." Some look for it in material things such as riches, power, prestige, honor, and sensual pleasures." "And some look for it in spiritual things" which befit the dignity of their souls. This help us to understand why some people are greedy in heaping riches and material goods, some would pursue hedonistic or purely worldly life-style, while others would enter a monastery spending their whole lives in singing the praises of God.

-In the first chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes, the "Preacher" who identified himself as "the son of David, king of Jerusalem, at the close of his life, after he

had tested everything and ransacked all earthly good in pursuit of happiness, made a perennial conclusion that all is vanity, and what is important is to fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of the human person.

-He recorded here his experience for the instruction and benefit of others, of course, of us. It shows that no created goods can truly satisfy the deepest longing of the human heart, and that true happiness is to be found in God alone and to live a virtuous life, stressing more heavenly values rather than earthly or worldly values.

-If we have done these, then, we are a new creation which would be tantamount to our own resurrection in Our Lord Jesus, as our good friend St. Paul says: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above," that is to say, "whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is gracious, whatever is lovely, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise," we need to think about these things and "the God of peace" will be with us; and not to set our minds only on things here on earth, because if we set our minds only on things here on earth we will definitely lost the eternal happiness that God is preparing for us, because it would be synonymous to having already our "reward." We will be likened to the man in the parable whom the Lord ascribes as foolish and said to him: "Fool! This night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

-So it is with a person who stores up treasures for himself, but is not rich toward God. However, the consensus of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, we can specifically name some of them such as: St. John Chrysostom, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Ambrose, and St. Clement of Alexandria, is that wealth in itself is not a bad thing so long as it is use properly, just as poverty, pure and simple, is not virtuous in itself.

-St. Ambrose says: "Not all poverty is holy, nor all riches criminal. The crime is not in possessing worldly goods but in not knowing how to use them properly." Accordingly, St. Clement tells the Christians of Alexandria that it would be irresponsible of them to think of throwing away their possessions when so much good can be accomplished with them. He said: "What kind of sharing would there be among people if no one had anything? How would one be able to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked and shelter the homeless if one were himself divested of all these things?"

-Therefore, what God is against on the man in this parable is not his possession but his corrupted will, his greediness in heaping up riches for his own benefit, and

to indulge in his own possession. That is why the Lord Jesus admonished His followers to shun all covetousness. In this parable the Lord is not knocking down the acquisition of wealth nor is He knocking private enterprise. What He is knocking down is the foolish idea that some people have on placing greater importance on heaping up material treasures than on heaping up spiritual treasures.

-When we will take off from this world we can bring nothing with us except what we have done in the body, that is, how we use our life on earth. St. Paul makes the point in his first letter to St. Timothy, when he writes, "We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world." And this is the substance the Lord Jesus makes in this parable. He tells us that what counts when we die is not the wealth we acquired during life, but the person we became in the process of living.

-He is saying that our priority in life should be on becoming a person, not on acquiring and heaping material things. Concretely, we violate the priority He speaks about when we acquire material possessions at the expense of becoming dishonest, when we acquire power at the expense of becoming ruthless, when we acquire prestige and honor at the expense of becoming vainglorious. In short, we transgress the priority the Lord speaks of when we acquire and heap passing treasures in this present life at the expense of losing unfading and eternal treasures in the life to come.

-A barber was passing under a haunted tree when he heard a voice say, "Would you like to have seven jars of gold?" He looked around and saw no one. But his greed was aroused, so he shouted eagerly, "Yes, I certainly would."

-“Then go home at once,” said the voice. “You will find them there.” The barber ran all the way home. Sure enough, there were the seven jars – all full of gold, except for one that was only half-full. Now the barber could not bear the thought of having a jar half-filled.

-He had all the jewelry of his family melted into gold coins and poured them into the half-filled jar. But the jar remained as half-filled as before. This was exasperating! He saved and skimped and starved himself and his family. To no avail. No matter how much gold he put into the jar it remained half-filled.

-So one day, he begged the king to increase his salary. His salary was doubled. Again the fight to fill the jar was on. He even took to begging. The jar devoured every gold coin thrown into it and remained stubbornly half-filled.

The king now noticed how miserable and starved the barber looked. "What is wrong with you?" he asked. "You were so happy and contented when your

salary was smaller. Now that it has been doubled you are so worn out and dejected. Can it be that you have the seven jars of gold with you?"

-The barber was astonished, "Who told you this, Your Majesty?" The king laughed. "These are obviously the symptoms of the person to whom the ghost offers the seven jars. He once offered them to me. I asked if this money could be spent or was merely to be hoarded and he just vanished without a word. That money cannot be spent. It only brings with it the compulsion to hoard. Go and return it back to the ghost this minute and you will be happy again." (De Mello)

-**Avarice** is a perversion of the natural right of every man to extend his personality by owning the things which minister to the needs of the body and his soul. Its disorder can come from desiring wealth as an end rather than as a means, or through the manner in which wealth is sought, with its disregard of others' rights, or in the way in which money is used – to increase one's capital without limit, instead of using the excess to minister to the needs of others. Avarice readily leads to other evil practices which are adopted to preserve wealth, such as fraud, perjury, dishonesty, perfidy, and harshness in dealing with others.

-Avarice is a sign that one does not trust in God but feels the need to be his own Providence. "So much for the man who would have none of God's help, but relied on his store of riches, and found his strength in knavery!" (Ps. 51:9). Unless corrected, avarice leads to several other serious defects of character: it causes an insensibility to the suffering and the needs of others; it creates anxiety and restlessness in the soul, which is continually bent on the pursuit of "more"; it leads to violence against others in the cause of protecting wealth; to lying, that the owner may acquire more; to perjury, that he may protect his hoard; and treachery, as in the case of Judas.

-“That avarice is unnatural is plainly evident from the fact that its origins demonstrably do not have their source in us and that it does not arise from what pertains to the possession of soul and flesh and the stuff of living. For it is certain that nothing has to do with the utility and need of our common nature apart from daily food and drink.

-That which exists as it were outside of nature, only disturbs monks who are lukewarm and wavering, whereas the things that are natural constantly try even the most proven monks and, indeed, those who dwell in the desert.

-There was a story of a man whose soul was controlled by the devil of greed. He had a lot of money, but wanted more and more. Because he was afraid that one day thieves would come and steal all his money, the man had a gigantic burglar-proof safe put into his cellar. The door was made of iron and cleverly hidden, so you could not find it in the wall.

-There was nothing this fellow like more than to take more and more gold into that safe, and stay there and let the money run through his fingers like water.

-One day, he won a lot of money in a lottery and was very excited. He carried the money into the safe and in his haste he forgot to take the key from the outside of the lock. The door always locked automatically...and it did this time...and the key was on the outside....

-After enjoying some time with his money, the man wanted to go out but couldn't. He screamed and shouted for help; but no sounds could ever get out of that safe.

-The family looked for him, and so did the police, for days. Finally, they got hold of the locksmith who had made the safe...and he assured them that a spring lock would automatically shut that door....And surely enough, there was the key on the outside.

-They opened the safe and found a very dead miser, extending his dead arms over the money. (Msgr. Arthur Tonne)

-Psalm 10: 3, says: "For the wicked boasts of the desires of his heart, and the man greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord." Greed is one of the seven capital sins, so it is not surprising that a person who is greedy curses and renounces the Lord. To renounce the Lord is tantamount to separating ourselves from Him and that's what sin does. Sin separates us from God. It is a movement away from God. Thus greed is rightly considered as one of the serious sins because it puts riches and other material possessions on the top priority of the scale of values while brushing off God into a hidden corner of one's life.

-Once a person is greedy for gain and put riches on the top priorities, then it encourages a false independence. For example, if a person is well-supplied with this world's good, he is very apt to think that he can deal well with any situation may arise. The thought of God doesn't come to him because he has some things to rely on. Riches make him think that everything has its price, that if he wants a thing enough he can buy it, that if any difficult situation descends upon him, he can buy his way out of it. He can come to think that he can buy his way into happiness and buy his way out of sorrow. So he comes to think that he can do well without God, that he is quite able to handle life by himself. In this case he renounces the Lord.

-He boasts of the desires of his heart to amass lots of treasures, but he ignores the danger that this would shackle him to this earth, for Our Lord said: "Where you treasure is there will your heart be also." If everything a person desires is contained within this world, if all his interests are here, he never thinks of another

world and the hereafter. It is perfectly possible for a person to be so interested in earthly gains that he forgets heavenly things, to be so involved in the things that are seen that he forgets the things that are unseen – and herein lies the tragedy, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal.

-The person greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord because he is never satisfied with what he has – there is still a deep seated ascending strong tendency to want still more, for nothing is enough for a person of whom enough is too little.

-Chapter 2 of the First letter of St. John distinguishes three kinds of covetousness or concupiscence: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. In the Catholic catechetical tradition, the ninth commandment forbids carnal concupiscence; the tenth forbids coveting another's goods.

-Of itself, avarice is venially sinful. But it may become mortal when a person is ready to use gravely unlawful means to acquire or hold on to his possessions, or when because his cupidity he seriously violates his duty of justice or charity.

-The secret of character training is to strengthen the weak spot in our character in cooperation with God's Grace. The evil must be called by its right and ugly name when it is discovered. Judas missed salvation because he never called his avarice by its right name – he disguised it as love of the poor.

-Avarice is an excessive or insatiable desire for money or material things. It implies a controlling passion for wealth or possessions and suggests not so much a strong as inordinate desire and is commonly associated with the lust for power. In its strict sense, avarice is the inordinate holding on to possessions or riches instead of using these material things for some worthwhile purpose. Reluctance to let go of what a person own is also avarice.

Envy

-In Greek history we read of a young man who so distinguished himself in the public games that his fellow citizens raised a statue in his honor, to keep fresh the memory of his victories. This statue so excited the envy of another rival who had been defeated in the races that one night he stole out under cover of darkness with the intention to destroy the statue. But he only broke it slightly. He then gave it a final heave and it fell – on top of him...and killed him. Envy always harms the one who is guilty of it. (Msgr. Arthur Tonne)

-Envy (from Latin *invidia*) is an emotion which "occurs when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it".

-Envy is sadness at another's good, as if that good were an affront to one's superiority. As the rich are avaricious, so the poor are sometimes envious. The envious person hates to see anyone else happy. The charm, the beauty, the knowledge, the peace, the wealth of others are all regarded as having been purloined from him. Envy induces ugly women to make nasty remarks about beautiful women, and makes the stupid malign the wise. Since the envious person cannot go up, he tries to achieve equality by pulling the other down. Envy is always a snob, is always jealous and possessive.

-Envy is sadness or discontent at the excellence, good fortune, or success of another person. It implies that one considers oneself somehow deprived by what one envies in another or even that an injustice has been done. Essential to envy is this sense of deprivation. Consequently it is not merely sadness that someone else has some desirable talent or possession, nor certainly the ambition to equal or surpass another person, which can be laudable emulation. It is not the same as jealousy, which implies an unwillingness to share one's own possessions.

-Envy is a sin against charity and, though serious sin in itself, allows of degrees of gravity depending on whether fully consented to and how important is the envied. The most serious sin of envy is sadness at the supernatural gifts or graces that another has received from God, that is, to envy sanctity.

-Envy begins by asking, "Why shouldn't I have everything that others have?" and ends by saying, "It is because others have these virtues that I do not have them." Then envy becomes enmity; it is devoid of respect and honor, and above all, it can never say, "Thank you," to anyone.

-The Church's Catechism teaches that "Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin." St. Augustine saw envy as "the diabolical sin." "From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity" (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2538).

-Often, envy involves a motive to "outdo or undo the rival's advantages". In part, this type of envy may be based on materialistic possessions rather than psychological states. Basically, people find themselves experiencing an overwhelming emotion due to someone else owning or possessing desirable items that they do not. For example, your next door neighbor just bought a brand new shoes you've been infatuated with for months now but can't afford. Feelings of envy in this situation would occur in the forms of emotional pain, a lack of self-worth, and a lowered self-esteem/well-being.

-Aristotle (in Rhetoric) defined envy "as the pain caused by the good fortune of others", while Kant (in his Metaphysics of Morals) defined it as "a reluctance to see our own well-being overshadowed by another's because the standard we use to see how well off we are is not the intrinsic worth of our own well-being but how it compares with that of others".

-Envy may negatively affect the closeness and satisfaction of relationships. Overcoming envy might be similar to dealing with other negative emotions (anger, resentment, etc.). Individuals experiencing anger often seek professional treatment (anger management) to help understand why they feel the way they do and how to cope. Subjects experiencing envy often have a skewed perception on how to achieve true happiness. By helping people to change these perceptions, they will be more able to understand the real meaning of fortune and satisfaction with what they do have.

-Envy represents a form of sadness and therefore refusal of charity, the baptized person should struggle against it by exercising good will. Envy often comes from pride; the baptized person should train himself to live in humility: "Would you like to see God glorified by you?" asked St. John Chrysostom, "Then rejoice in your brother's progress and will immediately give glory to God. Because his servant could conquer envy by rejoicing in the merits of others. God will be praised."

-There's a story told by Msgr. Arthur Tonne: *A businessman overtook two travelers. One was greedy and the other was envious. When they came to the parting ways, the merchant said he wanted to give them a parting gift. Whoever made a wish first, would have his wish fulfilled. But the other man would get a double portion of what the first had asked for. Each waited and waited for the other fellow to wish first. Finally the greedy man took the envious man by the throat and threatened to choke him unless he made his wish. So the envious man said, "All right. I wish to be blind in one eye." At once he lost the sight of one eye, while his companion lost both.* (Arthur Tonne)

-The tenth commandment requires that envy be banished from the human heart. When the prophet Nathan wanted to spur king David to repentance, he told him the story about the poor man who had only one ewe lamb that he treated like his own daughter and the rich man who, despite the great number of his flocks, envied the poor man and ended by stealing his lamb. In the case of David, his envy leads to the worst of crimes (Catechism of the Catholic Church #2538).

-The book of wisdom says that "Through the devil's envy death entered the world" (Wis. 2:24). in one of his homilies, St. John Chrysostom has this to say: "We fight one another, envy arms us against one another....If everyone strives to unsettle the Body of Christ, where shall we end up? We are engaged in making

Christ's Body a corpse....We declare ourselves members of one and the same organism, yet we devour one another like beasts"(Catechism of the Catholic Church #2538).

-Envy is one of the Seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church. In the Book of Genesis envy is said to be the motivation behind Cain murdering his brother, Abel, as Cain envied Abel because God favored Abel's sacrifice over Cain's.

-Envy is a sin of flesh. Envy is among the things that come from the heart, defiling a person. The whole body is full of darkness when the eye, the lamp of body, is bad. He who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished, said Solomon. Envy ruins the body's health, making bones rot and prohibiting the inheritance of the kingdom of God. Sometimes, as a punishment, people are left in their sins, falling prey to envy and other heavy sins.

-Envy is related to pride, which also can endure no rival or superior. Envy begins its course by seeking to lower the reputation of another, either secretly, by tale bearing and gossip, or overtly, by detraction. These succeeding, the term of envy is reached when there is joy at another's misfortune and when there is grief at another's success. When envy attacks another's spiritual progress or apostolic success, it is a grave matter. Much of journalism today is founded on envy; it seeks to stir up conflicts, to arouse controversy, to contradict, to foster antagonisms, to belittle. This is due, in part, to the general feeling of discontent and unhappiness in most souls. Misery loves company. The inner conflicts of the envious seem diminished when the weaknesses of well-known men are spread before them. Readers who enjoy columns of scandals and gossip unconsciously seek to drag others down to the level of their own behavior. The truly charitable person is reluctant to hear of evil; and the saint, when he hears it, keep it to himself and does penance for it.

-Christians must not fall into the trap of envying of the wicked, of the men of violence of those who seem to have a happy, prosperous, untroubled life, but always be aware that God will reward each according to his deeds.

-Also, the Christians must not look with evil eye at the last converts to avoid therefore becoming the last ones, missing the kingdom of God They should be happy for anyone saved, like Christ, who came to save the lost, as the shepherd seeking the lost sheep. Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, was among the lost ones and he succeeded in bringing salvation to him and to his house.

-Throwing away envy is a crucial condition in our path to salvation. Envy was seen by the Apostle Paul as a real danger even within the first Christian communities. Envy should remain a sin of the past, defeated by God teaching,

which, as in the tenth commandment, forbids us from coveting our neighbor's things, woman, and servants, and urges us to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, as Apostle Paul said,¹ and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Because brotherly, Christian love banishes definitively envy from our hearts.

-One of the most effective ways of counteracting jealousy and envy in ourselves is to say a prayer immediately for the intention of the person we resent. By referring our enemies to God and by spiritually wishing them well, we crush the psychological impulse toward envy. A second means is to try to emulate those who provoke our envy: the Church holds up the good example of the Saints, not to depress us, but to impress us – not to discourage us in our failings, but to encourage us to greater efforts. “Let us keep one another in mind, always ready with incitements to charity and to acts of piety” (Heb. 10:24).

Lust

There are several offenses against chastity (according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church):

1. *Lust* is disordered desire for or inordinate enjoyment of sexual pleasure. Sexual pleasure is morally disordered when sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes.
2. By *masturbation* is to be understood the deliberate stimulation of the genital organs in order to derive sexual pleasure. “Both the Magisterium of the Church, in the course of a constant tradition, and the moral sense of the faithful have been in no doubt and have firmly maintained that masturbation is an intrinsically and gravely disordered action.” “The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose.” For here sexual pleasure is sought outside of “the sexual relationship which is demanded by the moral order and in which the total meaning of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love is achieved.”

To form an equitable judgment about the subjects' moral responsibility and to guide pastoral action, one must take into account the affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety, or other psychological or social factors that can lessen, if not even reduce to a minimum, moral culpability.

3. *Fornication* is carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. It is gravely contrary to the dignity of persons and of human sexuality which is naturally ordered to the good of spouses and the generation and education of children. Moreover, it is a grave scandal when there is corruption of the young.

4. *Pornography* consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials.
5. *Prostitution* does injury to the dignity of the person who engages in it, reducing the person to an instrument of sexual pleasure. The one who pays sins gravely against himself: he violates the chastity to which his Baptism pledged him and defiles his body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Prostitution is a social scourge. It usually involves women, but also men, children, and adolescents (The latter two cases involve the added sin of scandal.). While it is always gravely sinful to engage in prostitution, the imputability of the offense can be attenuated by destitution, blackmail, or social pressure.
6. *Rape* is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person. It does injury to justice and charity. Rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom, and physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. It causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life. It is always an intrinsically evil act. Graver still is the rape of children committed by parents (incest) or those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them.

-These are all manifestation of Lust. Lust is an inordinate love of the pleasures of the flesh. It is the prostitution of love, the extension of self-love to a point where the ego is projected into another person and loved under the illusion that the Thou itself is being loved.

-Men and women are bored and discontented today; they turn to lust to make up for their inner misery, only, in the end, to find themselves plunged into a deeper despair.

-Lust is a shifting of the center of personality from the spirit to the flesh. In some instances, its excesses are born of an uneasy conscience and of a desire to escape from self toward others; sometimes there is a contrary desire to make the ego supreme by the subordination of others to itself.

-The effect of lust on the will is to develop a hatred of God and a denial of immortality. Excesses also deplete the source of spiritual energy to such an extent that one finally becomes incapable of calm judgment in any other field.

-There is no passion which more quickly produces slavery than lust – as there is none whose perversions more quickly destroy the power of the intellect and the will.

-A related effect of lust is the denial of immortality. As the egotist lives more and more in the flesh, the thought of judgment becomes more and more distasteful to him; to quiet his fears, he embraces the belief that judgment will never be. The acceptance of immortality would carry a responsibility which the lecherous ego is afraid to face – one which would force him to transform his whole life, if he did face it. Any mention of a future life is apt to drive such a person into a fury of cynicism; the reminder of the possibility of judgment increases his anguished anxiety. Every attempt to save such a man is regarded by him as an attack upon his happiness.

-According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, a Christian's heart is lustful when "venereal satisfaction is sought for either outside wedlock or, at any rate, in a manner which is contrary to the laws that govern marital intercourse." Pope John Paul II said that "lust devalues the eternal attraction of male and female, reducing personal riches of the opposite sex to an object for gratification of sexuality."

-In religion, especially Christianity, separate the definition of passion and lust by further categorizing lust as an inappropriate desire or a desire that is inappropriately strong, therefore being morally wrong, while passion for proper purposes is maintained as something God-given and moral.

-Lust is an emotion or feeling of intense desire in the body. The lust can take any form such as the lust for sex, lust for expensive objects (extravagance) or the lust for power. It can take such mundane forms as the lust for food as distinct from the need for food. Lust is a psychological force producing intense wanting for an object, or circumstance fulfilling the emotion.

-Lust is considered by Catholicism to be a disordered desire for sexual pleasure, where sexual pleasure is "sought for itself, isolated from its procreative and unitive purposes." In Catholicism, sexual desire in itself is good, and is considered part of God's plan for humanity. However, when sexual desire is separated from God's love, it becomes disordered and self-seeking. This is seen as lust.

-The Latin for extravagance (Latin: luxuria) – was used by St. Jerome to translate a variety of biblical sins, including drunkenness and sexual excess. St. Gregory the Great placed Luxuria as one of the seven capital sins.

-In Romanesque art, Luxuria is generally feminine, often represented by a siren or a naked woman with breasts being bitten by snakes. Prudentius in his *Psychomachia* or *Battle of the Soul* described

Luxuria, lavish of her ruined fame, loose-haired, wild-eyed, her voice a dying fall, lost in delight....

-In Hinduism, according to Brahma Kumaris, a spiritual organization which is based on Hindu philosophy, sexual lust is the greatest enemy to all mankind and the gateway to hell. For this reason followers do not eat onions, garlic, eggs, or non-vegetarian food, as the "sulphur" in them can excite sexual lust in the body, otherwise bound to celibacy.

-The physical act of sex is "impure," leading to body-consciousness and other crimes. This impurity "poisons" the body and leads to many kinds of "diseases."

-The Brahma Kumaris teach that sexuality is like foraging about in a dark sewer. Students at Spiritual University must conquer lust in order to find the Golden Age, a heaven on earth, where children are conceived by an asexual power of mind, and lasting for 2,500 years in the peace and purity of a holy swan moving on earth, over water, and in air.

-In Islam, intentional lascivious glances are forbidden. Lascivious thoughts are disliked, for they are the first step towards adultery, rape and other antisocial behaviors. Prophet Muhammad also stressed the magnitude of the "second glance," as the first glance towards an attractive member of the opposite sex could be just accidental or observatory, the second glance could be that gate into lustful thinking. Islam does not advocate celibacy but it requires marriage to conduct sex legally.

-In Judaism, all evil inclinations and lusts of the flesh are characterized by Yetzer Hara (the evil inclination). Yetzer hara is not a demonic force; rather, it is man's misuse of the things which the physical body needs to survive, and is often contrasted with Yetzer Hatov (the positive desire).

-Yetzer Hara is often identified with Satan and the angel of death, and there is sometimes a tendency to give a personality and separate activity to the Yetzer. For the Yetzer, like Satan, misleads man in this world, and testifies against him in the world to come. The Yetzer is, however, clearly distinguished from Satan, and on other occasions is made exactly parallel to sin. The Torah is considered the great antidote against this force. Though, like all things which God has made, the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination) can be manipulated into doing good: for without it, man would never marry, beget a child, build a house, or occupy himself in a trade.

-The most notable work to touch upon the sin of lust, and all of the Seven Deadly Sins, is Dante's Divine Comedy. Dante's criterion for lust was an "excessive love of others," insofar as an excessive love for man would render one's love of God secondary.

-In the first canticle of Dante's Inferno, the lustful are punished by being continuously swept around a whirlwind, which symbolizes their passions. The damned who are guilty of lust, like the two famous lovers, Paolo and Francesca, receive what they desired in their mortal lives, their passions never give them rest for all eternity. In Purgatorio, of the selfsame work, the penitents choose to walk through flames in order to purge themselves of their lustful inclinations.

-For Dante, Luxuria was both the first of the circles of incontinence (or self-indulgence) on the descent into hell, and the last of the cornices of Mount Purgatory, representing the excessive (disordered) love of individuals.

-For St. Gregory the Great and subsequent Thomism, the by-product of Luxuria, included mental blindness, self-love, haste and excessive attachment to the present world.

-In the Summa Theologiae, St. Thomas said of Lust: "...wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called the "unnatural vice."

-St. Thomas Aquinas defines the sin of Lust in question 153 and 154 of his Summa Theologica. St. Thomas says the sin of lust is of "voluptuous emotions," and makes the point that sexual pleasures, "unloosens the human spirit," and set aside right reason. St. Thomas restricts lust's subject matter to physical desires specifically arising from sexual acts, but St. Thomas does not assume all sex-acts are sinful. Sex is not a sin in marriage, because sex is the only way for humans to reproduce. If sex is used naturally and the end purpose is reproduction there is no sin. He says, "If the end be good and if what is done is well-adapted to that, then no sin is present." However, sex simply for the sake of pleasure is lustful and therefore, a sin. A man who uses his body for lechery wrongs the Lord.

-Sex may have the attributes of being sinless as in marriage because it is the only way for humans to reproduce; however, when a person is seeking sex for pleasure, he or she is sinning with lust. Lust is best defined by its specific attribute of wet dreams, adultery, rape, seduction, simple fornication, and unnatural vice.

Wet Dreams: St. Thomas Aquinas defined and discussed the topic of nocturnal emission, which occurs when one dreams of physical pleasure. St. Thomas

argues those who say that wet dreams are a sin and comparable to the actual experience of sex are wrong. He believes that such an action is sinless, for a dream is not under a person's control or free judgment. When one has a "nocturnal orgasm," it is not a sin, but it can lead to sins. St. Thomas says that wet dreams come from a physical cause of inappropriate pictures within your imagination, a psychological cause when thinking of sex while you fall asleep and a demonical cause where by demons act upon the sleepers body, "stirring the sleeper's imagination to bring about an orgasm". In the end, though, dreaming of lustful acts is not sinful. The "mind's awareness is less hindered," as the sleeper lacks right reason; therefore, a person cannot be accountable for what they dream while sleeping (p. 227).

Adultery: One of the main forms of lust seen frequently during the Middle Ages was the sin of adultery. The sin of adultery occurs when a person is unfaithful to his or her spouse, hence "invading of a bed not one's own" (p. 235). Adultery is a special kind of ugliness and many difficulties arise from it. When a man enters the bed of a married woman it not only is a sin, but it "wrongs the offspring," because the woman now calls into question the legitimacy of children (p. 235). If a wife has committed adultery before, then, her husband will question if all his wife's children are his offspring.

Rape: Rape is a kind of lust that often coincides with seduction and is defined as a type of lechery. Rape comes with force and violence: Rape occurs when a person craves the pleasures of sex so intensely that he uses force to obtain it. Rape is committed when violence is used to seduce, or deflower a virgin. Rape harms both the unmarried girl and her father, because the girl is property of her father. Rape and seduction can be discussed together, because both sins involve the deflowering of a virgin; however, rape can happen without seduction, as when a man attacks a widow or a sexually experienced woman and violates her. Therefore, wherever violence accompanies sex, you have the quality of rape and the sin of lust.

Simple Fornication: Simple fornication is having sex with one's wife for enjoyment rather than for bearing children. Fornication is also sex between two unmarried people, which is also a mortal sin. St. Thomas Aquinas says, "fornication is a deadly crime" (p. 213). Fornication is a mortal sin, but as St. Thomas notes, "Pope Gregory treated sins of the flesh as less grievous than those of the spirit" (p.217). Fornication was a grave sin such as that against property. Fornication, however, is not grave as a sin directly against God and human life; therefore, murder is much worse than fornication. Property in this case means that a daughter is the property of her, and if you do wrong to her, you then do wrong to him; therefore seducing a virgin or seeking pleasure from an unmarried woman is an invasion of a father's property.

Seduction: Seduction is a type of lust, because seduction is a sex act, which ravishes a virgin. Lust is a sin of sexual activity, and, "...a special quality of wrong that appears if a maid still under her father's care is debauched" (p. 229). Seduction involves a discussion of property, as an unmarried girl is property of her father. A virgin, even though free from the bond of marriage, is not free from the bond of her family. When a virgin is violated without a promise of engagement, she is prevented from having honorable marriage, which is shameful to herself and her family. A man who performs sexual acts with a virgin must "endow her and have her to wife," and if the father, who is responsible for her, says no, then a man must pay a dowry to compensate for her loss of virginity and future chance of marriage (p. 229).

Unnatural Vice: Unnatural vice is the worst kind of lust because it is unnatural in act and purpose. Unnatural vice happens variously, but St. Thomas Aquinas provides several examples including bestiality or intercourse with a "thing of another species," for example animals. St. Thomas said that, "bestiality goes beyond the bonds of humanity" and is therefore, unnatural.

-Anger or wrath is an intense emotional response. It is an emotion that involves a strong uncomfortable and emotional response to a perceived provocation, hurt or threat. Anger can occur when a person feels their personal boundaries are being or going to be violated. Some have a learned tendency to react to anger through retaliation as a way of coping. Anger may be utilized effectively by setting boundaries or escaping from dangerous situations.

-It is an emotional reaction that impacts the body. A person experiencing anger will also experience physical conditions, such as increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, and increased levels of adrenaline and nor adrenaline. Some view anger as an emotion which triggers part of the fight or flight brain response. Anger is used as a protective mechanism to cover up fear, hurt or sadness. Anger becomes the predominant feeling behaviorally, cognitively, and physiologically when a person makes the conscious choice to take action to immediately stop the threatening behavior of another outside force.

-Anger can have many physical and mental consequences. The external expression of anger can be found in facial expressions, body language, physiological responses, and at times public acts of aggression. Animals, for example, make loud sounds, attempt to look physically larger, bare their teeth, and stare. The behaviors associated with anger are designed to warn aggressors to stop their threatening behavior. Rarely does a physical altercation occur without the prior expression of anger by at least one of the participants. While most of those who experience anger explain its arousal as a result of "what has happened to them," psychologists point out that an angry person can very well

be mistaken because anger causes a loss in self-monitoring capacity and objective observability.

-Modern psychologists view anger as a primary, natural, and mature emotion experienced by virtually all humans at times, and as something that has functional value for survival. Anger is seen as a supportive mechanism to show a person that something is wrong and requires changing. Anger can mobilize psychological resources for corrective action. Uncontrolled anger can, however, negatively affect personal or social well-being and impact negatively on those around them. It is equally challenging to be around an angry person and the impact can also cause psychological/emotional trauma if not dealt with. While many philosophers and writers have warned against the spontaneous and uncontrolled fits of anger, there has been disagreement over the intrinsic value of anger. The issue of dealing with anger has been written about since the times of the earliest philosophers, but modern psychologists, in contrast to earlier writers, have also pointed out the possible harmful effects of suppressing anger.

Three types of anger are recognized by psychologists:

1. **Hasty and sudden anger**, by Joseph Butler, an 18th-century English bishop, is connected to the impulse for self-preservation. It is shared between both human and non-human animals, and it occurs when the animal is tormented or trapped. This form of anger is episodic.
2. **Settled and deliberate anger** is a reaction to perceived *deliberate* harm or unfair treatment by others. This form of anger is episodic.
3. **Dispositional anger** is related more to character traits than to instincts or cognitions and cases of scrum contractions. Irritability, sullenness and churlishness are examples of the last form of anger.

-Anger can potentially mobilize psychological resources and boost determination toward correction of wrong behaviors, promotion of social justice, communication of negative sentiment and redress of grievances. It can also facilitate patience. In contrast, anger can be destructive when it does not find its appropriate outlet in expression. Anger, in its strong form, impairs one's ability to process information and to exert cognitive control over their behavior. An angry person may lose his/her objectivity, empathy, prudence or thoughtfulness and may cause harm to themselves or others. There is a sharp distinction between anger and aggression (verbal or physical, direct or indirect) even though they mutually influence each other. While anger can activate aggression or increase its probability or intensity, it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for aggression.

Differences between related concepts

-The words annoyance and rage are often imagined to be at opposite ends of an emotional continuum: mild irritation and annoyance at the low end and fury or murderous rage at the high end. Rage problems are conceptualized as "the inability to process emotions or life's experiences"¹ either because the capacity to regulate emotion (Schore, 1994) has never been sufficiently developed or because it has been temporarily lost due to more recent trauma. Rage is understood as "a whole load of different feelings trying to get out at once" (Harvey, 2004) or as raw, undifferentiated emotions, that spill out when another life event that cannot be processed, no matter how trivial, puts more stress on the organism than it can bear.

-Anger when viewed as a protective response or instinct to a perceived threat is considered as positive. The negative expression of this state is known as aggression. Acting on this misplaced state is Rage due to possible potential errors in perception and judgement.

One simple dichotomy of anger expression is **Passive anger** versus **Aggressive anger**. These two types of anger have some characteristic symptoms: Passive anger

Passive anger can be expressed in the following ways:

- **Dispassion**, such as giving someone the cold shoulder or a fake smile, looking unconcerned or "sitting on the fence" while others sort things out, dampening feelings with substance abuse, overreacting, oversleeping, not responding to another's anger, frigidity, indulging in sexual practices that depress spontaneity and make objects of participants, giving inordinate amounts of time to machines, objects or intellectual pursuits, talking of frustrations but showing no feeling.
- **Evasiveness**, such as turning one's back in a crisis, avoiding conflict, not arguing back, becoming phobic.
- **Defeatism**, such as setting yourself and others up for failure, choosing unreliable people to depend on, being accident prone, underachieving, sexual impotence, expressing frustration at insignificant things but ignoring serious ones.
- **Obsessive behavior**, such as needing to be inordinately clean and tidy, making a habit of constantly checking things, over-dieting or overeating, demanding that all jobs be done perfectly.
- **Psychological manipulation**, such as provoking people to aggression and then patronizing them, provoking aggression but staying on the sidelines, emotional blackmail, false tearfulness, feigning illness, sabotaging relationships, using sexual provocation, using a third party to convey negative feelings, withholding money or resources.

- **Secretive behavior**, such as stockpiling resentments that are expressed behind people's backs, giving the silent treatment or under the breath mutterings, avoiding eye contact, putting people down, gossiping, anonymous complaints, poison pen letters, stealing, and conning.
- **Self-blame**, such as apologizing too often, being overly critical, inviting criticism.

Aggressive anger

The symptoms of aggressive anger are:

- **Bullying**, such as threatening people directly, persecuting, pushing or shoving, using power to oppress, shouting, driving someone off the road, playing on people's weaknesses.
- **Destructiveness**, such as destroying objects as in vandalism, harming animals, child abuse, destroying a relationship, reckless driving, substance abuse.
- **Grandiosity**, such as showing off, expressing mistrust, not delegating, being a sore loser, wanting center stage all the time, not listening, talking over people's heads, expecting kiss and make-up sessions to solve problems.
- **Hurtfulness**, such as violence, including sexual abuse and rape, verbal abuse, biased or vulgar jokes, breaking confidence, using foul language, ignoring people's feelings, willfully discriminating, blaming, punishing people for unwarranted deeds, labeling others.
- **Manic behavior**, such as speaking too fast, walking too fast, driving too fast, reckless spending.
- **Selfishness**, such as ignoring others' needs, not responding to requests for help, queue jumping.
- **Threats**, such as frightening people by saying how one could harm them, their property or their prospects, finger pointing, fist shaking, wearing clothes or symbols associated with violent behaviour, tailgating, excessively blowing a car horn, slamming doors.
- **Unjust blaming**, such as accusing other people for one's own mistakes, blaming people for your own feelings, making general accusations.
- **Unpredictability**, such as explosive rages over minor frustrations, attacking indiscriminately, dispensing unjust punishment, inflicting harm on others for the sake of it, using alcohol and drugs, illogical arguments.
- **Vengeance**, such as being over-punitive. This differs from retributive justice, as vengeance is personal, and possibly unlimited in scale.

-One should also consider the context or the bigger picture, e.g an aggressive action of manipulation may in fact work to help an individual, although a contradiction in a PC sense, an important distinction should be made when considering the context of anger when it promotes a positive effect that

outweighs the negative. For instance, a display of anger to shock an individual in order to get them to stop sunbathing so intensely, this may save their life, and would be therefore considered socially and morally acceptable in every sense.

Causes

-People feel angry when they sense that they or someone they care about has been offended, when they are certain about the nature and cause of the angering event, when they are certain someone else is responsible, and when they feel they can still influence the situation or cope with it. For instance, if a person's car is damaged, they will feel angry if someone else did it (e.g. another driver rear-ended it), but will feel sadness instead if it was caused by situational forces (e.g. a hailstorm) or guilt and shame if they were personally responsible (e.g. he crashed into a wall out of momentary carelessness).

-Usually, those who experience anger explain its arousal as a result of "what has happened to them" and in most cases the described provocations occur immediately before the anger experience. Such explanations confirm the illusion that anger has a discrete external cause. The angry person usually finds the cause of their anger in an intentional, personal, and controllable aspect of another person's behavior. This explanation, however, is based on the intuitions of the angry person who experiences a loss in self-monitoring capacity and objective observability as a result of their emotion. Anger can be of multicausal origin, some of which may be remote events, but people rarely find more than one cause for their anger. Disturbances that may not have involved anger at the outset leave residues that are not readily recognized but that operate as a lingering backdrop for focal provocations (of anger)." According to Encyclopædia Britannica, an internal infection can cause pain which in turn can activate anger.

Cognitive effects

-In inter-group relationships, anger makes people think in more negative and prejudiced terms about outsiders. Anger makes people less trusting, and slower to attribute good qualities to outsiders.

When a group is in conflict with a rival group, it will feel more anger if it is the politically stronger group and less anger when it is the weaker.

-Unlike other negative emotions like sadness and fear, angry people are more likely to demonstrate correspondence bias – the tendency to blame a person's behavior more on his nature than on his circumstances. They tend to rely more on stereotypes, and pay less attention to details and more attention to the superficial. In this regard, anger is unlike other "negative" emotions such as sadness and fear, which promote analytical thinking.

-An angry person tends to anticipate other events that might cause them anger. They will tend to rate anger-causing events (e.g. being sold a faulty car) as more likely than sad events (e.g. a good friend moving away).

-A person who is angry tends to place more blame on another person for their misery. This can create a feedback, as this extra blame can make the angry person angrier still, so they in turn place yet more blame on the other person.

Suppression

-Modern psychologists point out that suppression of anger may have harmful effects. The suppressed anger may find another outlet, such as a physical symptom, or become more extreme. John W. Fiero cites Los Angeles riots of 1992 as an example of sudden, explosive release of suppressed anger. The anger was then displaced as violence against those who had nothing to do with the matter. Another example of widespread deflection of anger from its actual cause toward scapegoating, Fiero says, was the blaming of Jews for the economic ills of Germany by the Nazis.

However, psychologists have also criticized the "catharsis theory" of aggression, which suggests that "unleashing" pent-up anger reduces aggression.

Physiology

-The external expression of anger can be found in facial expressions, body language, physiological responses, and at times in public acts of aggression. The facial expression and body language are as follows: The facial and skeletal musculature are strongly affected by anger. The face becomes flushed, and the brow muscles move inward and downward, fixing a hard stare on the target. The nostrils flare, and the jaw tends toward clenching. This is an innate pattern of facial expression that can be observed in toddlers. Tension in the skeletal musculature, including raising of the arms and adopting a squared-off stance, are preparatory actions for attack and defense.

Antiquity

-Ancient Greek philosophers, describing and commenting on the uncontrolled anger, particularly toward slaves, in their society generally showed a hostile attitude towards anger. Galen and Seneca regarded anger as a kind of madness. They all rejected the spontaneous, uncontrolled fits of anger and agreed on both the possibility and value of controlling anger. There were however disagreements regarding the value of anger. For Seneca, anger was "worthless even for war." Seneca believed that the disciplined Roman army was regularly able to beat the Germans, who were known for their fury. He argued that "... in sporting contests, it is a mistake to become angry".

-Aristotle on the other hand, ascribed some value to anger that has arisen from perceived injustice because it is useful for preventing injustice. Furthermore, the opposite of anger is a kind of insensibility, Aristotle stated. The difference in people's temperaments was generally viewed as a result of the different mix of qualities or humors people contained. Seneca held that "red-haired and red-faced people are hot-tempered because of excessive hot and dry humors."

Anger

Deliverance From a Wrathful Disposition

"Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of thy deliverance."

-It is a very natural human instinct that we feel a certain joy and relief when we are delivered from a tragedy or any traumatic incident; so also to be delivered from bloodguiltiness, that is, from a murderous or irritable disposition.

-In the Sermon on the Mount, after the Lord Jesus pointed out that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we will never enter the kingdom of heaven, He goes on to say: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment...."

-It was Our Lord's teaching that it was not enough not to commit murder; the only thing sufficient was never even to wish to commit murder. It may be that we have never struck a person, but who can say that s/he had never wished to strike somebody? In the Old Testament a person has to murder in order for him to be liable to judgment, but in the New Testament Our Lord says that whoever is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; and whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council.

-Hence, we have to beseech the Lord not only to be delivered from blood-guiltiness, but also from irritable temperament. It is one thing to feel angry or get angry, but it is another thing to have a wrathful character. Our good friend, St. Paul, says: "Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...."

-The Lord, too, really got angry. An incident occurred when He entered a synagogue. There was a man whose hand was withered. The Pharisees watched Him to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they

might accuse Him. The Lord said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come here." And He said to them: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And He looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart.

-Does Our Lord, then, violated His own teaching since He says: "I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment," but now He got angry with the Pharisees? By no means, of course, because, first of all, irritability is not His character. Did He not say: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart?"

-Of course, it is wrong to lose one's temper, but it can be wrong also not to be angry. Our heavenly friend, St. Thomas Aquinas, says that "one may sin by not having used a holy anger when it was proper or necessary to do so." The anger, to be just anger, must be all the time under the control of reason.

-We take into account here the issue of anger instead of bloodguiltiness, for it is very likely that we won't kill anyone but it is quite possible to feel angry. Anger is a dislike hatched from the memory of offences received, a desire to get even with the person who have offended us.

-Now remembrance of the offences that happened to us is one thing, loss of temper or rage another, annoyance another, and disturbance of mind yet - another. For example, someone who is lighting a fire sets a spark to the tinder, this is some brother's/sister's provoking remark, this is the point where the fire of anger starts.

-Of what consequence is that brother's/sister's remark? If we put up with it, the spark goes out; but if we go on thinking, 'why did s/he say that to me and what do I have to say to him/her? And, 'If s/he did not want to annoy me s/he would not have said that, and s/he must think that I also want to annoy him/her.

-So we add a small bit of wood to the flame, or some bit of fuel, and we produce some smoke, that is disturbance of the mind. This disturbance floods the mind with thoughts and emotions which stimulate the heart and embolden it to attack. And this boldness incites us vengeance on the person who annoyed us and this becomes recklessness, that is to say, the heart is stirred up to rashness when the thoughts are set on malice, but malice taken upon itself by prayer and hope leaves the heart at peace.

-If, therefore, we put up with a sharp answer from the brother/sister, the little firebrand is extinguished before it causes trouble. Even if we are a little troubled and we desire promptly to get rid of, since it is still small, we can do so by remaining silent with a prayer on our lips and by one good heartfelt act of humility.

-But if we dwell on it and inflame our hearts and torment ourselves with thoughts about why s/he said this to us, and what do we have to say to him/her, we are blowing on the embers and adding fuel and causing smoke! From this influx of thoughts and conflicting emotions the heart catches fire and there we are in a passion.

-St. Basil calls this passion a boiling up of the blood around the heart: this makes us what is called irascible. But even this commotion can, if we wish, be put out before it becomes rage. If we allow ourselves to remain disturbed, however, we will begin to let fly at others – we will be like someone piling logs on a blazing furnace and fanning the fire and so making more firebrands.

-This is how we get into a rage. This is exactly what a desert father, Abbot Zosimos, said when he was asked to explain the saying, "Where there is no bad temper fighting dies out." "If at the beginning of a dissension," he said, "when there is first smoke and sparks begin to fly, if a man do not prevent it by blaming himself and humbling himself before he gets drawn into the quarrel and gets into a temper, until, not remaining tranquil but wrangling and becoming reckless, he acts like a man who is piling a wood on a fire which gets hotter and hotter until he has made a great blaze. For just as burning logs are reduced to cinders and get covered ash but do go out for ages, even if water is thrown on them, so also anger that endures for a long time becomes rancor. And for the rest, unless a man sweats blood he will never be free from it."

-If, from the beginning, we take the blame when we are reproached, without trying to justify ourselves or making counter – charges and so repaying evil for evil, we will be delivered from all these maladies. This is why when a passion arise, when it is young and feeble, we have to cut it off and dash it against the rock, that is, call upon the name of Christ in prayer; otherwise it stiffen and cause us a great deal of trouble.

-On the other hand, if we humble ourselves and call upon the name of the Lord in prayer, it is very likely that we will be delivered not only from bloodguiltiness, but above all from a wrathful disposition. Calling upon the name of the Lord in prayer involves the uncovering of our own passions, for His name is a powerful light that searches the thoughts and intentions of our heart; it has strong potency to save us from our sins.

-Anger is a violent desire to punish others. Here we refer not to righteous anger, such as that of Our Lord when He drove the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, but the wrong kind of anger, which expresses itself in temper, vindictiveness, tantrums, revenge, and the clenching of the fist. It is an emotional sense of displeasure and usually antagonism, aroused by real or apparent injury. The anger

can be either passionate or non-passionate, depending on the degree to which the emotions are excited, strongly in one case and mildly in the other.

-Anger is very common among those with bad consciences; thieves will become far angrier when accused of theft than any honest man; unfaithful spouses will fly into a rage when caught in infidelity; women guilty of jealousy and malice “take it out” on their employees in the home. Those who displease such egotists are repulsed violently, and the good who reproach them by the pattern of their virtue are viciously maligned.

-There are various degrees of anger; the **first** is touchiness – undue sensitiveness and impatience at the least slight. For instance, because the coffee is cold at breakfast, or because the morning paper is late, the impatient ego nags and grumbles. The **second** stage is flaring up of the temper, with violent gesticulation, blood boiling, redness of the face, and even throwing of things; all of these are indications that the ego will tolerate no interference in the fulfillment of its selfish desires. The **third** and final stage is reached when there is physical violence directed against another – when hatred seeks to “get even” either by doing harm to another person or else by desiring his death. Many a man does not realize how much diabolical anger there is in him until his ego is aroused. Anger prevents the development of personality and halts all spiritual progress – not only because it disturbs the mental poise and good judgment, but because it blinds to the rights of others and disturbs that spirit of recollection which is so necessary for compliance with the inspirations of grace.

-Anger is always related to some frustration of the ego. The desert Fathers used to say it is foreign to a monk to be angry, or to annoy other people. And again: *The man who masters anger masters the devil, but the man who is worsted by this passion is a complete stranger to the monastic life.*

-What ought we then to say about ourselves who give way to violent anger and, even bear malice to the point of animosity toward one another? What else can we do but bewail our pitiable and inhuman condition?

-Vices can be classified according to the virtues they oppose, or also be linked to the *capital sins* which Christian experience has distinguished, following St. John Cassian and St. Gregory the Great. They are called “capital” because they engender other sins, other vices. They are pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia.

-In the account of Abel's murder by his brother Cain, Scripture reveals the presence of anger and envy in man, consequences of original sin, from the beginning of human history. Man has become the enemy of his fellow man. God declares the wickedness of this fratricide: “What have you done? The voice

of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

-In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord recalls the commandment, "You shall not kill," and adds to it the proscription of anger, hatred, and vengeance. Going further, Christ asks his disciples to turn the other cheek, to love their enemies. He did not defend himself and told Peter to leave his sword in its sheath. By recalling the commandment, "You shall not kill," our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral.

-*Anger* is a desire for revenge. "To desire vengeance in order to do evil to someone who should be punished is illicit," but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution "to correct vices and maintain justice." If anger reaches the point of a deliberate desire to kill or seriously wound a neighbor, it is gravely against charity; it is a mortal sin. The Lord says, "Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

-**Gluttony** is an abuse of the lawful pleasure that God has attached to eating and drinking, which are necessary means for self-preservation. It is an inordinate indulgence in the pleasures of eating and drinking, either by taking more than is necessary or by taking it at the wrong time or in too luxurious a manner.

-The malice in excessive love of eating and drinking comes from the fact that it enslaves the soul to the body and thus tends to weaken the moral and intellectual life of man.

-There is not today as much excess in eating as in drinking – modern man does not emulate the pagan Romans who use to tickle their throats after eating a meal in order that, having disgorged, they could once again enjoy the pleasures of the table. The excess today is more apt to be in drinking, as the high incidence of alcoholism so well testifies. Medical authorities bear witness to the fact that hard drinking causes more deterioration on the intellect and personality. Memory, judgment, concentration are all affected; personal pride and social judgment vanish. Among the moral effects are despair, a weakening of the will, and the materialization of life.

-Gluttony (Latin: *gula*), derived from the Latin *gluttire* meaning to gulp down or swallow, means over-indulgence and over-consumption of food, drink, or wealth items.

-In Christianity, it is considered a sin if the excessive desire for food causes it to be withheld from the needy.^[1] Some Christian denominations consider gluttony as one of the seven deadly sins, a misplaced or inordinate desire for food/drink.

Church leaders from the ascetic Middle Ages took a more expansive view of gluttony:

St. Gregory the Great

-Pope Gregory I (St. Gregory the Great), a doctor of the Church, described the following ways by which one can commit sin of gluttony, and corresponding biblical examples for each of them:

1. Eating before the *time* of meals in order to satisfy the palate.

Biblical example: Jonathan eating a little honey, when his father Saul commanded no food to be taken before the evening.^[1Sa 14:29] (Note that this text is only approximately illustrative, as in this account, Jonathan did not know he was eating too.)

2. Seeking delicacies and better *quality* of food to gratify the "vile sense of taste."

Biblical example: When Israelites escaping from Egypt complained, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks and the onions and the garlic," God rained fowls for them to eat but punished them 500 years later.^[Num 11:4]

3. Seeking to *stimulate* the palate with overly or elaborately prepared food (e.g. with luxurious sauces and seasonings).

Biblical example: Two sons of Eli the high priest made the sacrificial meat to be cooked in one manner rather than another. They were met with death.^[1Sa 4:11]

4. Exceeding the necessary *quantity* of food.

Biblical example: One of the sins of Sodom was "fullness of bread." [Eze 16:49]

5. Taking food with too much eagerness, even when eating the proper amount, and even if the food is not luxurious.

Biblical example: Esau selling his birthright for ordinary food of bread and pottage of lentils. His punishment was that of the "profane person . . . who, for a morsel of meat sold his birthright," : we learn that "he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully, with tears." [Gen 25:30]

-The fifth way is worse than all others, said St. Gregory, because it shows attachment to pleasure most clearly. To recapitulate, St Gregory the Great said that one may succumb to the sin of gluttony by: 1. Time (when); 2. Quality; 3. Stimulants; 4. Quantity; 5. Eagerness. He asserts that the irregular desire is the sin, not the food: "For it is not the food, but the desire that is in fault".

St. Thomas Aquinas

-In his *Summa Theologica* (Part 2-2, Question 148, Article 4), St. Thomas Aquinas reiterated the list of five ways to commit gluttony:

- *Laute* - eating food that is too luxurious, exotic, or costly
- *Studiosae* - eating food that is excessive in quality (too daintily or elaborately prepared)
- *Nimis* - eating food that is excessive in quantity (too much)
- *Praepropere* - eating hastily (too soon or at an inappropriate time)
- *Ardeniter* - eating greedily (too eagerly)

-St. Aquinas concludes that "gluttony denotes inordinate concupiscence in eating"; the first three ways are related to the food itself, while the last two related to the manner of eating. He says that abstinence from food and drink overcome the sin of gluttony, and the act of abstinence is fasting. (see: Fasting and abstinence in the Roman Catholic Church) In general, fasting is useful to restrain concupiscence of the flesh.

St. Alphonsus Liguori

-St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote the following when explaining gluttony:

"Pope Innocent XI has condemned the proposition which asserts that it is not a sin to eat or to drink from the sole motive of satisfying the palate. However, it is not a fault to feel pleasure in eating: for it is, generally speaking, impossible to eat without experiencing the delight which food naturally produces. But it is a defect to eat, like beasts, through the sole motive of sensual gratification, and without any reasonable object. Hence, the most delicious meats may be eaten

without sin, if the motive be good and worthy of a rational creature; and, in taking the coarsest food through attachment to pleasure, there may be a fault."

-"Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony" (Proverbs 23:2).

-The chief error about Gluttony is to think it only pertains to food. Some people can't have enough toys, television, entertainment, sex, or company. It is about an excess of anything. There are at least three forms of Gluttony:

- Wanting more pleasure from something than it was made for.
- Wanting it exactly our way (delicacy).
- Demanding too much from people (excessive desire for other people's time or presence).

More Pleasure Than It Was Made For

-The world is full of good things, from the beauty of the stars to the ever-changing and never-changing oceans to the pleasure of human company. We are free to enjoy these things without becoming focused on any one of them to the exclusion of all else. It is possible to become so caught up in a pleasure, whether food or fun, that we can no longer enjoy other things, and would be willing to sacrifice other pleasures for the one.

-We enter into Gluttony when we demand more pleasure from something than it was made for. Normally, we can only eat so much food, but some people in Ancient Rome wanted more pleasure, so they threw up after the meal and then ate more. This allowed them to enjoy eating more at the cost of health (and dignity).

Delicacy

-In "The Screwtape Letters," C.S. Lewis describes delicacy as a desire to have things exactly our way. He gives the example of food having to be prepared just right, or in just the right amount, but it isn't limited to food. We might complain about unimportant defects in a product, the temperature in the room, or the color of a laundry basket. There is a certain amount of discomfort to be expected in life, but the Glutton will have none of it. Instead of becoming strong by suffering the minor inconveniences of life, the Glutton insists on being pampered. No one dares to point out how petty or foolish they are. In fact, some celebrities are praised for their excessive perfectionism, as though it were a virtue.

Demanding Too Much From People

-There can be a healthy and natural enjoyment of time spent with friends and acquaintances, but some people just can't get enough. They make demands

until the other person moves away or explodes in anger. The Glutton is wounded that someone would take offense at their "love" for them. At least some people can get away. Far worse is when a parent demands too much from a child, requiring too much time or too many accomplishments from someone too small to grant so many pleasures. Even pets get excessive attention at times, but they don't seem to mind as much.

-In some dating relationships, one person desires the other's company constantly, to the point that the other can barely hold down a job or continue in school. Whatever the reasons, the object of affection is expected to provide the pleasure of their company (at least) more of the time than is reasonable. Even in marriage, it is possible for a couple to be so "romantic" that the children are neglected. One legitimate pleasure (sex) can become obsessive to the point that another pleasure (the company of one's children) is lost.

The Good News

-Because Gluttony is generally a sin of the flesh, the flesh limits it. If we consume too much food or drink, our body (usually) lets us know, either by gaining weight or illness. If we are too fussy about things (delicacy), people will tell us to do it ourselves. And if we demand too much from people, they will fly from us and we will be alone more often. So, we usually get a view of the problem, and a chance to change.

-It is said that St. Thomas More was an exceptionally fun person to be around, so much so that King Henry VIII of England kept calling for him, preventing Thomas from going home to his family. Thomas eventually began to curtail his merrymaking so that he was more dull company. This strategy worked, and he was able to live at home more often.

-The cure for Gluttony lies in deliberately reducing our use of pleasurable things, not in eliminating them. When eating, quit before feeling stuffed. When snacking, don't just keep stuffing, but quit after a while. With people, allow some quiet time together, and also get some time alone. Of course, if time alone is very pleasurable, get out more often. And if the toast is a bit too brown, eat it anyway.

"Is gluttony a sin? What does the Bible say about overeating?"

-Answer: Gluttony seems to be a sin that Christians like to ignore. We are often quick to label smoking and drinking as sins, but for some reason gluttony is accepted or at least tolerated. Many of the arguments used against smoking and drinking, such as health and addiction, apply equally to overeating. Many

believers would not even consider having a glass of wine or smoking a cigarette but have no qualms about gorging themselves at the dinner table. This should not be!

-Proverbs 23:20-21 warns us, "Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags." Proverbs 28:7 declares, "He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father." Proverbs 23:2 proclaims, "Put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony."

-Physical appetites are an analogy of our ability to control ourselves. If we are unable to control our eating habits, we are probably also unable to control other habits, such as those of the mind (lust, covetousness, anger) and unable to keep our mouths from gossip or strife. We are not to let our appetites control us, but we are to have control over our appetites. (See Deuteronomy 21:20, Proverbs 23:2, 2 Peter 1:5-7, 2 Timothy 3:1-9, and 2 Corinthians 10:5.) The ability to say "no" to anything in excess—self-control—is one of the fruits of the Spirit common to all believers (Galatians 5:22).

-God has blessed us by filling the earth with foods that are delicious, nutritious, and pleasurable. We should honor God's creation by enjoying these foods and by eating them in appropriate quantities. God calls us to control our appetites, rather than allowing them to control us.

(From Lat. *gluttire*, to swallow, to gulp down), the excessive indulgence in food and drink. The moral deformity discernible in this vice lies in its defiance of the order postulated by reason, which prescribes necessity as the measure of indulgence in eating and drinking. This deordination, according to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, may happen in five ways which are set forth in the scholastic verse: "Prae-propere, laute, nimis, ardentem, studiosam" or, according to the apt rendering of Father Joseph Rickaby: too soon, too expensively, too much, too eagerly, too daintily.

-Clearly one who uses food or drink in such a way as to injure his health or impair the mental equipment needed for the discharge of his duties, is guilty of the sin of gluttony. It is incontrovertible that to eat or drink for the mere pleasure of the experience, and for that exclusively, is likewise to commit the sin of gluttony. Such a temper of soul is equivalently the direct and positive shutting out of that reference to our last end which must be found, at least implicitly, in all our actions. At the same time it must be noted that there is no obligation to formerly and explicitly have before one's mind a motive which will immediately relate our actions to God.

-It is enough that such an intention should be implied in the apprehension of the thing as lawful with a consequent virtual submission to Almighty God. Gluttony is in general a venial sin in so far forth as it is an undue indulgence in a thing which is in itself neither good nor bad. Of course it is obvious that a different estimate would have to be given of one so wedded to the pleasures of the table as to absolutely and without qualification live merely to eat and drink, so minded as to be of the number of those, described by the Apostle St. Paul, "whose god is their belly" (Philippians 3:19). Such a one would be guilty of mortal sin.

-Likewise a person who, by excesses in eating and drinking, would have greatly impaired his health, or unfitted himself for duties for the performance of which he has a grave obligation, would be justly chargeable with mortal sin. St. John of the Cross, in his work "The Dark Night of the Soul" (I, vi), dissects what he calls spiritual gluttony. He explains that it is the disposition of those who, in prayer and other acts of religion, are always in search of sensible sweetness; they are those who "will feel and taste God, as if he were palpable and accessible to them not only in Communion but in all their other acts of devotion." This he declares is a very great imperfection and productive of great evils.

-Evagrius considered gluttony a sort of gateway sin — indulge in this and all the other sins will follow. "When the intellect is blunted by satiety," he wrote, "it does not receive the knowledge of God." Fun fact: Evagrius also considered gluttony "the mother of fornication." Thomas Aquinas, in his "Summa Theologica" — still an influence on Christian thought — named pride as the gateway sin because it places man before God. Still, he was no fan of gluttony, either, concluding, "It is the inordinate desire of food that defiles a man spiritually."

How are these sins supposed to be deadly?

-Aquinas fleshed out the seriousness of the deadly sins, writing that because they must be engaged in knowingly, they are a purposeful rejection of God's grace. Today, the deadly sins are often called "mortal sins" because they lead to a total separation from God.

-**Sloth** is a malady of the will which causes neglect of one's duty. In the physical realm it appears as laziness, softness, idleness, procrastination, nonchalance, and indifference; as a spiritual disease, it takes the forms of a distaste of the spiritual, lukewarmness at prayers, and contempt of self-discipline.

-Sloth is the sin of those who read only novels, but never a philosophy of life. sloth disguises itself as tolerance and broad-mindedness – it has not enough intellectual energy to discover Truth and follow it. Sloth loves nothing, hates nothing, hopes nothing, fears nothing, keeps alive because it sees nothing to die for.

-Sloth is ego-centric; it is basically an attempt to escape from social and spiritual responsibilities, in the expectation that someone else will care for us. The lazy man is a parasite. He demands that others cater to him and earn his food for him; he is asking special privileges in wishing to eat food which he has not earned. Whereas St. Paul says that those who do not work should not eat.

-There are various degree of laziness: **indolence**: a careless execution of work; **procrastination**: the endless postponing and putting off of tasks until a tomorrow which never comes; **listlessness**: an aversion for effort in any form. It makes one negligent in his works of piety, inclines him to shorten his prayers or to neglect them altogether; it may even degenerate into a hatred of things spiritual. Sloth becomes spite, when it leads to resentment against those who advocate our spiritual development; **distraction**, when it prompts the heart and mind to turn from the spiritual to the temporal; **faintheartedness**, when it seeks to avoid doing those things which are spiritually or morally difficult.

"His master replied, `You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?"

- Matthew 25:26

"If a man is lazy, the rafters sag; if his hands are idle, the house leaks."
- Ecclesiastes 10:18

But I Do Lots of Stuff!

-Most people think of sloth as laziness, not doing much of anything, but just sitting around doing nothing. Many people stay busy most of the time but don't do the things they should, putting them off for later. They may be staying busy so they have an excuse.

-Sloth (or acedia) is a kind of spiritual laziness (as opposed to mere physical fatigue or depression). It means not making it a priority to do what we should, or change what we should in ourselves. Some people might call it apathy, which means a lack of feeling.

-An example might be a parent that always sends their child to bed early so they can have lots of quiet time to play solitaire or watch TV. Perhaps they could let the child stay up a little later and play a game with them or read. Or perhaps they always tell their child "no!" without taking the trouble to explain why...

-Another example could be someone active in a political movement. Perhaps they don't bother to read other opinions and so never question whether their group is right or wrong. As a result, they could support some very wrong beliefs, such as racism, because they never tried to find the truth.

-In business, some people never check into the laws to see if their practices are illegal. For Christians, we sometimes don't really want to know what the Bible (or our Church) teaches about something, so we put off reading or asking about it. Sloth is quite possibly the main reason why people don't read good spiritual books. They will read Christian fiction or some odd Gnostic gospel instead that "tickles their ears," but never the ones that could call them to action: loving their neighbor, helping the poor, telling the truth.

-Lastly, there might be a student who naturally picks everything up with very little effort. Instead of learning more than required, or doing volunteer work, they might just sit around getting high or gossiping. Not because it is fun, but because they just don't care.

-It should be noted that vices often are disguised as virtues. So sloth is often disguised as calmness, serenity, keeping a level head, open mindedness, etc... If sloth is the reality, people will get very defensive.

Or maybe not if the problem is sloth: it is too much effort to defend it.

-To a great extent boredom is elevated in modern times and this fuels sloth. In effect we are hyper-stimulated in the modern world. Our frantic pace, endless interruptions, and the rich abundance of entertainment, fast-paced movies, video games, all are a feast for the eyes but they hyper-stimulate. From the time we awaken to our return to sleep there is almost never a moment of silence, or a time when we are not being bombarded by images, often flickering and quickly changing.

-This hyper-stimulation means that when we come upon things like quiet prayer or adoration, or are asked to listen for an extended period, or when the imagery is not fast changing we are easily bored.

-Sloth is one of the seven capital sins. It is the most difficult sin to define, and to credit as sin, since it refers to a peculiar jumble of notions, dating from antiquity and including mental, spiritual, pathological, and physical states. One definition that may be given to sloth is habitual disinclination to exertion.

-Views concerning the need for one to work to support society and further God's plan and work also suggest that, through inactivity, one invites the desire to sin. "For Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." ("Against Idleness and Mischief" by Isaac Watts).

-In the *Philokalia*, the word dejection is used instead of *sloth*, for the person who falls into dejection will lose interest in life. Laziness is considered unbecoming in many traditional customs. The demon Belphegor is often associated with sloth.

-The word "sloth" is a translation of the Latin term *acedia* (Middle English, *accidie*) and means "without care". Spiritually, *acedia* first referred to an affliction attending religious persons, especially monks, wherein they became indifferent to their duties and obligations to God. Mentally, *acedia*, has a number of distinctive components of which the most important is affectlessness, a lack of any feeling about self or other, a mind-state that gives rise to boredom, rancor, apathy, and a passive inert or sluggish mentation. Physically, *acedia* is fundamentally associated with a cessation of motion and an indifference to work; it finds expression in laziness, idleness, and indolence.

-In his *Summa Theologica*, Saint Thomas Aquinas defined sloth as "sorrow about spiritual good" and as "sluggishness of the mind which neglects to begin good... [it] is evil in its effect, if it so oppresses man as to draw him away entirely from good deeds."

-Sloth includes ceasing to utilize the seven gifts of grace given by the Holy Ghost (Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord); such disregard may lead to the slowing of one's spiritual progress towards eternal life, to the neglect of manifold duties of charity towards the neighbour, and to animosity towards those who love God.

-One of the more misunderstood of the Cardinal Sins is sloth. This is because most see it merely as laziness. But there is more to sloth than that. Let's take a moment and consider some aspects of the Cardinal sin we call in English, Sloth.

-The Greek word we translate as sloth is ἀκηδία *akedia* (a = absence + kedos = care), meaning indifference or negligence. St Thomas speaks of sloth as sloth is sorrow for spiritual good. By it we shun spiritual good, as toilsome (cf ST II-II 35,2).

-Some modern commentators speak of sloth as a don't-care feeling, some even as a kind of falling out of love with God and the things of God (cf Rev 2:4). On account of sloth, the idea of right living, and the gift of a transformed humanity inspires, not joy, but aversion or even disgust, because it is seen as laborious, or as involving the setting aside currently enjoyed or sinful pleasures. By sloth many experience sorrow, not joy or zeal, in following God and receiving a transformed human life. Rather they are distressed at the prospect of what might have to occur should they embrace the faith more deeply.

-Sloth also tends to dismiss the power of grace since it focuses on the “trouble” or effort attached to walking in the Christian way, rather than to understand it as a work of God.

-As said above, many people today equate sloth with laziness. But sloth is not merely laziness, it is more properly understood as sorrow or indifference. While it is true, sloth may sometimes look like boredom and a casual laziness toward attaining spiritual good, it is also true that sloth can also be manifested by a frantic busyness about worldly things, so as to avoid spiritual questions or live a reflective life.

-Consider, for example a man who is a workaholic. Now suppose too that this man has a wife and children. A man in this position has some very significant gifts and duties beyond his career. He is a husband, a father, and the spiritual leader of his home. He is also a disciple, whom the Lord has summoned to new life, to the great discovery of God, and the deepest meanings and realities of his life. He also has the awesome dignity to announce these truths to his wife and children.

-But all of the duties and glories of his vocation overwhelm and even scare him. It all seems so irksome and the task too open-ended. Frankly, he doesn't want to reflect too much, because it might summon him to ponder things he would like to avoid considering, such as moral questions, or priorities, or whether he is really spending enough time with his wife and children, or whether his life is really focused on things that matter most. No, it's all just too irksome, too ridden with uncertainty to enter more deeply into the spiritual life. Work is easier, and at work they call him “sir” and do what he says.

-So, he buries himself in his work. And this helps him to avoid prayer, and reflection. Of course there is “no time” for mass or for praying with his wife and children. There is no time for scripture, retreats and the like.

-This man is not lazy, but he is slothful. In the end his workaholism is sloth, for it is sorrow and aversion at the gift that the Lord offers him to come out into the deeper waters and lower his net for a catch. His sorrow for spiritual goods, in this case, is manifest by a kind of avoidance rooted in fear. By sloth he is not joyful at the invitation of the Lord or the Church. Instead he is sorrowful and averse to what he sees as toilsome, and possibly as raising uncomfortable things he would rather not look at. He does not hate God or the faith, but it is all just too much.

-That said, sloth does often manifest as a kind of lethargy, and kind of boredom that can't muster any interest, energy, joy or enthusiasm for spiritual gifts. Such

people may be enthusiastic about any number of things, but God and the faith are not among them.

-And boredom feeds right into sloth. The “still, small voice of God,” the quiet of prayer, the simple reading of Scripture and pondering its message, the unfolding of spiritual meaning through reflection, the slower joys of normal human conversation in communal prayer and fellowship...none of this appeals to many who are hyper-stimulated, and used to a breakneck pace. Sunday, once the highlight of the week for many (due to the music, the beauty of the liturgy, the hearing of the sermon, the joy of fellowship and the quiet of Holy Communion), is now considered by many as boring and about as appealing as getting a flu shot; a necessary evil at best. Thus, sloth is fueled by the boredom our culture feels at anything not going 90 miles an hour.

-Peter Kreeft says that:

Sloth is a cold sin, not a hot one. But that makes it even deadlier. [For] rebellion against God is closer to him than indifference....God can more easily cool our wrath than fire our frozenness, though he can do both. Sloth is a sin of omission not commission. That too makes it deadlier, for a similar reason. To commit evil is at least to be playing the game... Sloth simply does not play God's game, either with him or against him....It sits on the sidelines bored....Better to be hot or cold than lukewarm.

-Sloth of course gives rise to many sins whereby people do not pray, nor attend mass, nor go to confession, or read Scripture, people do not grow in the spiritual life and whereby fail to become the man or woman God has made them to be. In some sense every sin contains an element of sloth for when someone sin he/she indicates a kind of aversion to the perfecting of graces God offers us. Rather than see the moral law of God as a great summons to freedom, we sorrowfully reject that call as too much trouble.

-Socially too there are many manifestations of sloth. But just to mention two that are common in the modern world.

1. Secularism – By secularism, here is meant not the more recent hostility to religious faith, but more the older meaning of the word wherein one's preoccupation is essentially a worldly one. It is amazing how passionate and interested we can get about worldly things. Perhaps it is a football game, or it is politics, or some new electronic device that has just come out. Perhaps it is our careers or our, or the stock market, or something in the news. Yes, we are passionate people and even the most reserved have strong interests that occupy their mind and vividly capture their interest.

-And yet, many of those who rejoiced at the basketball game that ended so thrillingly, or were passionately engaged at the political rally, or excited about the latest twist on their favorite television show, many of these same passionate, joyful people can muster no interest in prayer, Mass, or Bible study. And if they do get to Mass they look in agony until it is over.

-This is secularism and a form of sloth. We have time and passion for everything else, but not for God. It is a very deep drive. We are mesmerized by many things of the world, but bored, sorrowful and thus slothful over the things of the spiritual life. Where is the joy? Where is the zeal? Where is the hunger for completion in God?

-This is sloth. It is not merely depression or boredom, it is sloth, it is a sorrow toward the spiritual gifts of God. It is a deep drive of the flesh, and it has to go. But only God and our openness to his grace can ultimately save us and bring us more alive from this death directed drive.

2. Relativism – Many today indulge a notion that there is no absolute or unchanging truth to which we are summoned and must ultimately conform. This is relativism. And many who practice it actually congratulate themselves for their “tolerance” and open-mindedness. They think of their relativism as a virtue. But, more often than not, relativism is simply sloth masquerading as tolerance. The fact is, if there is a truth, (and there is), then I should joyfully seek it, and base my life on its demands and promises.

-But many indulge the notion of relativism, for it is an easy way out. If there is no truth then I am not obliged to seek it, and base my life on it. Frankly many are averse to and sorrowful toward the truth for they find its demands irksome. This is sloth, for their sorrow is directed toward a very precious spiritual gift of God, the gift of truth. Instead of joyfully seeking the truth, the relativist is sorrowful and avoidant of the gift though they couch their sloth in other words such as “broad-mindedness” and “tolerance.”

-To be sure there is a place for tolerance. But the true virtue of tolerance is usually misunderstood today and equated with approval. The proper understanding of tolerance is *the conditional acceptance of or non-interference with beliefs, actions or practices that one considers to be wrong but still “tolerable,” such that they should not be prohibited or unreasonably constrained.* The key point that is often lost today is that the tolerated beliefs or practices are considered to be objectionable, wrong or bad. If this *objection component* is missing, we are not speaking any longer of “toleration” but of “indifference” or “affirmation.”

-Hence, relativists who slothfully dismiss that there is truth to be found cannot rightly call their position “tolerance.” It is, in fact mere indifference, and a form of sloth.

-For all of our modern claims to be tolerant and open-minded, the more usual fact is that we are just plain lazy and slothful when it comes to seeking the truth. We (collectively speaking) do not love the truth but shun it, sorrowfully regarding its possible claims on us. Jesus said rightly, *This is the judgement: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God* (Jn 3:19-21).

-Sadness and acedia are not usually engendered by some external provocation, like the others that we have spoken about previously. For they are known to distress frequently and very bitterly even the solitaries and those who live in the desert and have no human contact. Whoever has lived in the desert and experienced the struggles of the inner man will testify from these same experiences how very true this is.

-Self-examination always bears on one or another of these basic vices. It is hard to bear – the ego is reluctant to have itself examined. We tend to cheat ourselves through flattery. Whereas, David begged God to search his heart, knowing that if he did it himself he would overlook serious sins. But self-knowledge is rewarding, for these two things go together: self-revelation and God-revelation. The more a person discovers himself the way he really is, the more he feels the need of God, and the more God manifest Himself to such a soul. The soul becomes single-hearted, easy to understand.

-The less a person knows himself, the more complex he is: a mind into which self-analysis has never penetrated has a thousand unrelated motives and concerns. Its complexity is due to a want in inner penetration and the failure to bring all things to a focus in a single human goal.

-Although these vices have different origins and varying operations, yet they are connected among themselves by a certain affinity and, so to speak, inter-linking, such that the overflow of the previous one serves as the start of the next one. For **from an excess of gluttony** there inevitably springs fornication; **from fornication**, avarice; from avarice, anger; **from anger**, sadness; and **from sadness**, acedia.

-In order to conquer acedia, sadness must first be overcome; in order to drive out sadness, anger must be cast out, beforehand; in order to extinguish anger,

avarice must be trampled on; in order to eradicate avarice, fornication must be rooted out; in order to overthrow fornication, the vice of gluttony must be disciplined.

-Vainglory and pride, are linked in similar fashion, like the vices that we have spoken of such that growth in the first becomes the start of the second, for an overflow of vainglory begets the beginnings of pride.

-When the former have been rooted out these (vainglory and pride) sprout forth all the more, and at the death of the former these spring up and grow more vigorously. Hence we are also attacked by these vices in a different way. We fall into one of those six vices when we have been seduced by the one that comes before, but we are in danger of falling into these vainglory and pride when we are victorious and, indeed, particularly after triumphs.

-Although vainglory is multiform and multifarious and exists in many subdivisions, nonetheless it is of two kinds. The first is that by which we are uplifted because of carnal and external things. The second is that by which we are inflamed with the desire for empty praise because of spiritual and hidden things.

-Yet in one way vainglory is beneficial for beginners, for those who are still stirred up by carnal vices, e.g., when they happen to be harassed by the spirit of fornication, they should think of the dignity of the priestly office or the opinion of people who might believe that they are holy and blameless, and if only because of this consideration they should reject the impure urges of desire, judging them as base and unworthy either of their own good name or of that rank, they are restraining the greater evil with a lesser.

-It is better for a person to be troubled by the vice of vainglory than for him to fall into the fire of fornication, from which he could not or could barely be saved once he had been ruined.

-Fornication is allied by a special relationship to gluttony; anger is closely yoked to avarice, acedia to sadness, and pride to vainglory.

-Some people admit that when they were living in the Cenobia of Syria they were so easily able to go without eating for five days, whereas now they are so hungry at the 3rd hour that they can hardly keep the daily fast until the 9th hour. When someone asked why, after having lived in a cenobium where he felt no hunger and often disdained to eat for whole weeks, he should now be hungry at the 3rd hour, Macarius replied pointedly: 'because here there is no one to see you fasting and to support and sustain with his praises. But there the attention of others and the food of vainglory filled you to repletion.'

-Although it is more tolerable to be subject to the vice of vainglory than to yield to that of fornication, yet it is more difficult to escape from the domination of vainglory.

-Sow for yourself in right doing and reap in mercy and be enlightened with the light of knowledge. You see the light of knowledge cannot be properly acquired unless there first enter the soul the seed of righteousness from which may come the grain of life and the straw of vainglory (St. Bernard).

-The Fathers used to say it is foreign to a monk to be angry, or to annoy other people. And again: *The man who masters anger masters the devil, but the man who is worsted by this passion is a complete stranger to the monastic life.*

-What ought we then to say about ourselves who give way to violent anger and, even bear malice to the point of animosity toward one another? What else can we do but bewail our pitiable and inhuman condition?

-Self-knowledge is really the reversal of criticism from those around us to ourselves. Observing the neighbor's faults raises our ego; as we deplete the ego and face our own predominant fault, the neighbor who before seemed hateful takes on a new loveliness. By losing our pride and vanity, we gain a world of friends in heaven and on earth.

-Once vices of the inner person have been conquered and the mind has been established in tranquility it will be possible to enjoy unceasing prayer.

On Patience

The old philosopher Socrates tells us that when he was a boy, he chanced upon a man who was trying to unlock a door. The key would not work. The fellow bit the key and kicked the door. It opened. Then and there the youthful thinker made up his mind never to give way to anger.

And it worked – years later. One day his very critical complaining wife Xanthippe, tongue lashed him for some trivial matter. And as he was walking away from her, she threw a pail of water at him.

Socrates just philosophically remarked, “Well, after thunder, we usually do get a shower, don't we?”

THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE IN WESTERN MONASTIC TRADITION

-St. Gregory the Great said that true patience consists in bearing calmly the evils others do to us, and in not being consumed by resentment against those who inflict them. Those who only appear to bear the evils done them by their neighbors, who suffer them in silence while they are looking for an opportunity for revenge, are not practicing patience.

-Virtue in the sight of others is to bear with those who oppose us, but virtue in God's sight is to love them. This is the only sacrifice acceptable to God.

-Everyone who will not suffer the malice of Cain refuses the role of Abel. We cannot call that person good who refuses to tolerate those who are not. The good we do is without value unless, at the same time, we bear in patience the evil doing of our neighbor.

-The overriding ambition of every Christian is to find entry into God's kingdom, to enjoy eternal life, to be established in blissful & unqualified communion with God, the source & fulfillment of all that is good. About the ultimate goal of Christian & monastic life there is no dispute.

-The major means of growing in godliness & of finding access to the kingdom of heaven is purity of heart. Our task in this life is to work at reducing the level of our inner dividedness. As we become less inconsistent within ourselves, we begin to find harmony & simplicity where previously there was only conflict & enslavement.

-There are two nuances which St. Benedict has chosen to add to Cassian's understanding of what means are suitable to gain the kingdom of God. The first is that the achievement of the goal is the result not of individual proficiency, but of sharing in the fruits of Christ's passion & death. Secondly, we share in the

victory of Christ by becoming sharers in his sufferings and this occurs principally through patience.

CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND

-The significance is grounded in the cross of Christ which has become the way of life which Christians follow. This was particularly evident in those times when the following of the Gospel involved the giving up of everything behind, even life itself, in order to gain Christ.

-For them, "the cross" & "dying daily" were not pious clichés but proximate possibilities. In such a climate, it was imperative that the church proclaim a philosophy which kept before the mind's eye of believers the example of Christ, which dwelt upon his teachings concerning gentleness under persecution and which nurtured a lively personal faith in the coming of the kingdom.

-To survive the onslaught of massive pain & death, a warm devotion was needed, not a cool, abstract logic; it was only passionate devotion to Jesus Christ which could motivate the martyrs to endure & remain loyal to their faith.

-So it happened that much of the spiritual devotional teaching of the Church in the early centuries was conveyed through the account of martyrdom, written by Christians with a view to strengthening the faith of their co-religionists. The same line of instruction continued in the celebration of the cult of the martyrs & in the writing & reading of the martyrologies.

-It was not that the Church hoped that all would become martyrs in fact. Rather, it sought to propagate those attitudes & dispositions which the martyrs demonstrated in an eminent degree. In sharing physically in the sufferings of Christ they truly walked in the way that was his, demonstrating that they were indeed genuine "disciples and imitators of the lord." It is in our patience that we share in the sufferings of Christ, as St. Paul said.

-The practical consequences of the Gospel way are evident in the lives of the martyrs. It progressively became clear that those not facing actual martyrdom, the teaching of Christ yet requires steadfast adherence to the same principle of faith & a comparable willingness to undergo self-sacrifice.

-Already in Origen's preaching we see the beginnings of a doctrine of spiritual martyrdom. He said: "I have no doubt that in this assembly there are those who, known only to him, are already martyrs in his sight by the testimony of their consciences. These are ready, if they be asked, to pour out their blood for the sake of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have no doubt that these are they

who have taken up their cross and have followed him" (*In Numeros homilia*, 10.2, PG 12.639a).

-Martyr or not, the Christian was seen to be called to reproduce in his life the forbearance & endurance of Christ, expressed both in a willingness to die for the Lord and in the honest determination to live a life of self-sacrificing love in accordance with his teaching. It is patience that makes the martyrdom a good thing and without this virtue there is no witness given to Christ, irrespective of the sufferings undergone.

PATIENCE IN A MONASTIC CONTEXT

-Impatience & irascibility are so patently (evident/obvious) foreign to the monastic pursuit that it is no source of surprise that the ancient monastic authors repeatedly advocate the practice of patience. There are many kindly stories emanating from Egypt which illustrate the esteem in which patience was held by the Desert Fathers.

-Patience is seen as the opposite of giving up the fight; it means persevering with the struggle to acquire virtue, and being prepared for a long, long engagement. Monastic life is viewed as a continuing struggle with temptations: it is only through grappling with temptations that a monk's virtue becomes evident. It is staying constant throughout the whole weary succession of struggles that makes a man a real monk.

-Evagrius Ponticus mentions occasionally but gives it no particular emphasis. However, one who is sick, he said, is to give thanks for his pain and to be patient with those who attend him. John Cassian was much more fully aware of the importance, even to the point of making some measure of it the condition for entry into monastic life. In general he associates it with humility: its components are seriousness, obedience & meekness, longanimity, gentleness, discretion and the whole range of Christian virtues. Its opposite is pride, expressed particularly in anger & sadness.

-Patience is the monks' way of imitating the example of the martyrs. Communal living is impossible without patience. In fact Cassian understands the monastery as the school of patience. He laments the fact that many go off into the wilderness to avoid the pangs associated with acquiring this virtue. As if patience depended on the absence of provocation!

-There are three principal texts in RB. The first on patience as a mode of participating in Christ's passion. The second is the exposition of the practicalities of patience in the fourth step of humility. The third major reference is the

statement in the chapter on good zeal. "Let them tolerate most patiently their infirmities, be they bodily or behavioral."

-Instead of being scandalized, real monks (those with good zeal) continue to tolerate the evil which remains in their brothers. They do not complain or campaign for their emendment, but remain steadfast & unshaken in their affection for them. There is more than endurance here; there is wisdom & serenity which enable the genuine monk to accept painful consequences of another's sin rather than abandon love.

-Rather than injure others, the good monk bears his own injuries patiently.
-The new comer to the monastery is expected to demonstrate by his patience that he has the courage to deal with the hardships that will inevitably come his way. Another text speaks about the novice being tested in all patience.

-For St. Gregory the Great, patience is the root of all virtue (*Pastoral Rule*). Notwithstanding his own considerable interest in miracle, he declares bluntly: "*I believe that the virtue of patience is greater than signs & wonders.*" (from the *Dialogue*) For him, patience was a matter of keeping faith with God in times of difficulty & temptation. "*There is no virtue of patience in prosperity. Only he is really patient who is crushed by adversity and yet does not deviate from the straight course of his hope.*" (from the *Moralia*)

-Patience is the ultimate test of holiness. "*He only is truly perfect who is not impatient with the imperfection of his neighbor. The one who ceases to bear another's imperfection is his own witness that he has not advanced to perfection.*" (*Moralia*) "*None of the saints attained to heavenly glory except through maintaining patience.*" (From *Ezekiel*)

-The trials that are potential source of disturbance either come from God or are permitted by him. St. Gregory recommends that we have patience abiding in the mind, ready to be called into operation when the situation warrants it. We should prepare ourselves for hardships in advance, by accepting them theoretically, before they happen; in this way we will be protected "*by the breastplates of patience.*" (*Moralia*)

A Mennonite was driving down a muddy, rutted road with his horse, wagon, and young son. Once in their chosen rut, they had to stay there because it was so deep. They met another horse and wagon coming from the opposite direction – and in the same rut.

After debating for some time who should move out of the rut, the Mennonite finally said, “If you don’t move, I’ll have to do something I’d rather not.”

Intimidated, the other wagon-driver backed up and out of the rut. The Mennonite drove forward.

Farther down the road the son asked the father, “What would you have done if he had not moved?”

“Backed up,” the father replied.

-Patience involves endurance, not for its own sake, but because it follows on the recognition that present troubles are only part of the total picture. The wise man does not allow himself to break out in spontaneous irritation against his suffering.

-St. Gregory is insistent that patience is not a matter of cold self-containment. If it is real, it continues to love those who are the source of suffering: *“True patience also loves the one whom it bears.”* St. Gregory, with his usual perceptiveness, adds one further note: *“It is not enough to be patient during the time of suffering; one must also ensure that no residue of bitterness remains. Subsequent vindictiveness cancels out all previous merit in accepting manfully.”*

-On the understanding that patience if left unexercised soon disappeared, the monastery was viewed as a school of patience. Bearing with various difficulties experienced in communal life and in remaining faithful to discipline developed one’s capacity to endure and cultivate interiorly a deeper patience that was close to peace, a “patience of heart,” a “patience of mind.”

-This virtue, along with contrition, mortification & the practice of good works, was understood as one of the principal means of purification for the monks. Likewise, the solid good habits it generates make it a source of final perseverance.

-It derives its positive power & confidence from a recognition of the victory of Christ. He remains the prime example & model of patience for the monk to imitate. It is through him that we can hope to pass from patience to glory. It is to him that we must look to draw that inner strength & quiet that will enable us to be undefeated by our troubles.

-As St. Aelred of Rievaulx beautifully said: *“Lest this divine fire cooled by the winds of injury, one should gaze constantly with the eyes of the mind on the tranquil patience of the dear Lord and Savior.”*

-It is patience which enables us to bear what is burdensome in others, mindful of the reward Job received for his patience, and confident that this is a sure road which leads to glory. For St. Bernard, patience must be suffused with buoyancy which makes it a positive force for good. In particular, instead of merely allowing the conflict to continue and enduring its effects, patience needs to become active in making peace.

-Patience is not an end in itself; there are limits to endurance so that avoidable burdens are not to be sought. St. Bernard said: *"Patience is a great virtue, but I would not have wished such things on you; on occasion it is more praiseworthy to be impatient....That patience is not good which allows you to become a slave when you could have been free."*

THE PRACTICE OF PATIENCE

-There is little doubt that for many western monks patience appeared as the battleground *par excellence* the spiritual life. The real test of the genuineness of a person's endeavor is to be found in the way he deals with difficulties.

-St. Benedict, in line with antecedent tradition, recognized the importance of making trial of novices in this respect, and telling them quite clearly that the way to God was characterized by hardships & difficulties.

-It is in his description of the 4th degree of humility that St. Benedict gives the clearest indications of what one can expect to encounter in monastic life: *harshness, things which go against the grains, injuries, suffering, "being tormented by death all day long," "being reckoned as sheep for the slaughter," "being tested like silver in the furnace," "being led into a trap," "having afflictions laid upon one's back," "having men walk over one's head"* which means being under a superior, adversities, *"being struck on the cheek," "having one's clothes stolen, being forced to walk long distances and having to endure false brothers, persecution and being cursed"* (RB 7:35-43).

-Nobody can say that no warning was given. These are the elements of which monastic life is made-as they are also the stuff of most human experience. Instead of asking ourselves why we have to endure them, who is responsible for them and how such trials are to be eliminated, we would do better to take for granted that they, or something similar, will always be with us and so devote our energies to the task of living creatively despite of them.

-It is worth noting that St. Benedict locates the main thrust of patience in the realm of obedience to a superior. A monk demonstrates his humility, his openness to being exalted by God, by the manner in which he copes with the problems posed by obedience. At the same time, it is important to recognize

that patience embraces an area far broader than that of the subordination of a monk to his abbot.

-There are **five principal areas** where patience is tried and where the monk has to deal with temptation either to hurry the process to an uncreative termination or precipitately to abandon it and try his hand at something else.

1. Harsh Treatment

-There is no doubt that people's sensibilities are often violated in monastic life. In our own case we feel that this is because nobody has bothered to come to an understanding of us and so we are asked to render inappropriate service, we are overlooked and neglected, we are the victims of the neuroses of others and are sometimes the object of violence & injustice.

-There is no doubt that objective unfairness occurs in monastic life and occasionally monstrous injustices are committed, but the more usual grinding down of sensibilities can be understood as serving a creative role in monastic life insofar as it contributes to the downfall of the ego, which is a necessary cataclysm before the advent of total prayerfulness.

-Generally such difficulties result not from the malice or coldness but from the thoughtlessness and selfishness of others. This is simply part of human life which the normal sane adult learns to cope with. There is no point in making a great lament and drowning in self-pity; it is a fact of life.

2. Liabilities of Personal History

-One of the most tyrannical fantasies which can paralyze the human being is the idea that somehow or other it might be possible to wipe the slate clean and make a brand new start. Alas, there is way that this can be done.

-We are left with a cumulative burden of personal liabilities, example: decision made, opportunities missed, guilt born and nurtured, mistakes committed, reputations made and broken, sickness, weakness, skills left undeveloped, fears and anxieties collected. Often our greatest irritations come from ourselves and from the residue of our own past. We may rail against circumstances and administrators but the problem is not theirs but ours alone.

-Monks are not immune to this inrush of regret; it can help if we realize that wherever we go we will carry it with us. Creative living, however, begins with understanding and accepting such limits.

3. Slowness of Real Growth

-Only babies grow quickly. Genuine growth for human adults is slow. We often bewail the fact that after many years of solid effort we appear to be less advanced than we were before we entered. It is especially hard for us who live in a culture which maximizes speed and has created scores "instant" products, to appreciate that the best things in life take time.

-Conversion may be a relatively instant event, but it does not bring with it all the values, attitudes and habits which render the ideal practically possible. Years intervene while we struggle to become what we are.

4. Alteration

-An associated source of difficulty can be found in the intrinsic changeableness of spiritual life. Life can be difficult simply because, as soon as we develop the skills to handle one set of circumstances, everything changes, our aptitudes become irrelevant and we are confronted with new and fearsome challenges.

-It seems to be part of God's pedagogy for us that we are always left wrong-footed; we are not allowed to save ourselves, no matter how desperately we desire it.

5. The Incomprehensibility of God's Way

-The lesson learned through years of living with God is that his interventions in our lives are beyond prediction and outside the range of our human comprehension. Retrospectively, perhaps, glimmers of understanding may relieve the enigma, but almost always the meaning of God's present actions eludes us. This is a call to faith and in some cases it demands heroism to continue trusting and loving and not losing hope.

-Patience extends its influence through all these zones in such a way that it becomes an indicator of the quality of our whole spiritual response. There is one further aspect which is worth mentioning. Often the lack of sound spiritual theory can increase the burdens of life-sometimes to an intolerable limit.

-Ordinary difficulties can become exaggerated simply due to defective understanding of the rhythms of Christian life. There is mental confusion at the time of trouble or temptation with the underlying assumption that these difficulties should not be taking place.

-We can allow ourselves to become depressed to the point of desperation, or we can punish ourselves and others by becoming angry at everything which we see as a factor in our sorry condition, or we can dedicate ourselves to a life of unceasing escapism, throwing ourselves into work and hobbies and mindless entertainments to such a degree that the pain is temporarily assuaged. In any

case we have ceased to operate as a monk; we are the plaything of our own anxieties.

-The solution, if we retain any interest in finding one, is to be found in a realistic confidence in the providence of God, who leaves even serious faults in persons otherwise holy. All that comes from the hand of God is good, even when it bears to the light of the ignominy of human weakness.

-St Clement Hofbauer of Vienna was collecting funds for the orphans whose fathers had died in the Napoleonic wars. He walked into a restaurant, where three men were playing cards, and asked them for a contribution to his good work. One of them cursed him and spat at his face.

St. Clement quietly took out his handkerchief, wiped the spit from his cheek, and said without the slightest sign of anger, "Now, that was for me, sir. How about something for my orphans?"

The abusive card player was so dumbfounded that he reached into his pocketbook and handed the saint all the money he had with him.

-St. Benedict distinguishes **four stages of patience**.

1. Endurance

-Being able to bear with suffering is part of patience; it is its beginning. It means being tireless in doing good even when the practice of virtue is more a matter of good habit than of present pleasure. It means setting aside feelings and adhering to the objective teaching of faith. It is not a depressive state of paralysis, but carrying on after the initial novelty has worn off, persevering in a task which, though worthy, brings no pleasure.

2. Equanimity

-It is in asking for more than endurance that St. Benedict distinguishes himself from the Master. He qualifies the idea of patience by addition of the phrase *with a quiet mind*. Real patience does not interiorly agitated violently. There is an inner stillness which accepts the imposition, even though it may judge it to be unfair.

-The truly patient monk is less concerned about the external details of the situation than about his own handling of it. We need to come to the realization that this is God's will for us at this moment, even though we are aware of the sordid politics that have contributed to its fashioning.

-Patience is really a matter of faith in the providence of God. If we can accept in our heart that this unpleasant moment is a vehicle of God's concern, then we

will be less angry or depressed because of human idiocy and more able to avoid inward rebellion.

3. Joy

-It is not enough to accept harsh treatment with equanimity; St. Benedict wants his disciples to be glad about it. Like the apostles who went forth from their punishment "rejoicing that they were found worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name" (Acts 5:41).

-“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing....Blesses is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:2-4;12).

-The joy of the patient monk comes from his hope in the final outcome of his struggles and the realization of divine love. “Secure in their hope of God’s retribution, they continue joyfully: ‘But in all these things we have overcome because of him who has loved us.’”(RB 7.39)

4. Asking for More

-Quoting the Sermon on the Mount, St. Benedict tells us to accept more pain than was originally offered, to give up more of our goods than were originally taken and spontaneously to offer more when pressed into service. True patience is not only persevering, tranquil and even cheerful, it gives the impression of an unsatisfied appetite for more of the same.

-The practice of patience is, in reality, no more than a realistic living of the Gospel. The factor in patience which gives it power is our personal relationship with Christ. We are borne up during our troubles by a sense of solidarity with Our Lord. But there is even more than this.

-The ability to love one’s enemies and to pray for one’s persecutors goes beyond human skills; it is only possible when one evacuates the ego so that Christ is able to love within one and from the midst of pain to reach out and negate the malice of sin.

THE MEANING OF PATIENCE

-There is a mystery involved in patience. Often when we know the full story behind some circumstances we are happy to endure inconvenience and even pain. Once we have perceived that the hostile actions of others really derive

from their own suffering and not from malice in our regard, it becomes easier to anticipate and endure rough treatment at their hands.

-In fact, in dealing with another individual, we are encountering somebody who is severely scarred by the malice and indifference of others. If we really understood how much a victim this other person is, we would be compassionate and not condemnatory.

-What he is doing is handing on the evil that was done to him and we are the recipients. Our pain has its ultimate origins, perhaps, in the first human beings. Each generation is wounded and perpetuates its pain by inflicting it on others.

-Genuine Christian patience calls a halt to this seemingly inevitable transmission. It receives evil and, instead of passing it on, absorbs it. Injuries are not repeated; the process is halted. Patience puts an end to the endless cycle of mutual hurt.

-In his lifetime this is what Christ did and it is to this that he calls us. Not to render evil for evil, but rather patiently to bear hurt that is done to us. We have before us the example of the Lamb of God who bears, who takes upon himself the sins of the world, who, in St. Paul's adventurous image, became sin for us.

-Thus St. Paul was to write to the Colossians: "Now I rejoice in suffering for your sake and in my flesh I bring to completion whatever is lacking to the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of the Church, his body" (Col.1:24).

-Tribulations borne in the name of Christ reduce the level of suffering to be endured by others for the purification of sins. To accept pain is not mere stoicism; it is ultimately altruistic.

-There is a strange economy which transforms pain into an encounter with God, for God is far less likely to abandon us in hardship than in times of ease. St. Ambrose said, "There are many who seek Christ in times of quiet and do find him, but they find him in persecutions and find him quickly. The same is true after temptations since God is present to his faithful in their dangers."

-Negative situations have the potential to be transformed by the impress of the cross of Christ. For the patient monk the conflicts and pains of the human situation can become the exercise-ground for his faith and open up to him the possibility of finding eternal life by allowing his grasp on present life to be loosened.

-It is the clear mandate of Christ that to gain life, we must lose life. The grain of wheat must die before it becomes fruitful. And for us, so many problems in the spiritual life come simply from our unwillingness to die.

-St. Dorotheus of Gaza said that we must take care of patience & courage; for they are the corner stones which bind together the building and join the corner stones which bind together the building and join one wall to another.

-Without patience & courage no one can perform a single virtue. And for St. Isaac of Syria patience is the mother of comfort, and is a certain strength born from largeness of heart.

-If patience grows in our souls, it is a sign that we have secretly received the blessing of consolation. If any of our affairs have an unhappy end through our fault, we should not grieve for the fault but accept with patience the pain of the misfortune and bear it willingly & lovingly. If any misfortune happen through another's fault, we need to resign even in such an event; neither to lose our patience nor peace of heart.

-Patience allows the burden of what we undergo to be lightened and kept in perspective. On the other hand, impatience never improves effectively a situation. It produces only increased tension, dissipation and frustration.

-True patience is to suffer the wrongs done to us by others in an unruffled spirit and without feeling resentment. Patience bears with others because it loves them. True patience grows with the growth of love. We put up our neighbors to the extent that we love them. If we love, we are patient. If we cease loving, we will cease being patient. The less we love, the less patience we show. If we truly preserve patience in our souls, we are martyrs without being killed.

-St. Francis de Sales said that should be patient with everyone, but above all with ourselves. It means not to be disturbed with our imperfections and always rise up bravely from a fall.

-The patience of which Our Lord & St. Paul speak is a gift. It is received in us, not acquired by will power alone. Evangelical patience is an essential quality of enduring love. It is integral to loving receptivity, to true listening, to being deeply with another.

-Patience arises from love and increases as love intensifies. It is only love & because of love that patience, extended over a long period of time, becomes perseverance and endures all things. As a virtue, patience is related to courage and fortitude. It is a power, yet it is not a force of aggressivity but of true Christian resignation.

-Approaching patience from somewhat behavioral perspective, St. Augustine describes patience as "that by which we endure evil with equanimity so that we may not through a lack of equanimity abandon the good through which we attain something better." Through patience endurance God opens us to the good which is deeper than the evil so that we may arrive at what is truly better.

-We need to endure with patience God's painstaking manner of transforming & purifying. We have to wait patiently for him to effect our spiritualization.

Transformation takes a lifetime. So, we have to wait patiently the presence of the Lord.

-We share in the passion of Our Lord by our patience. St. John of Damascus said that victory is attained when we keep silent when the other shouts, when we refrain from speaking when provoked...in this way, we practice patience & in the process will win back our brother.

*** Peter ***

-Peter is weak now (at Christ's passion) because he followed Christ from afar. How much better for us in, every way, to follow Christ closely, that is, promptly, diligently, and courageously, than to keep afar off, that is, tepidly, laxly, and cowardly. Experience proves that, as flies keep away from a cauldron that is hot, but draw near when it cools, so the devil keeps away from the fervent who resist him, and molests perpetually who are lukewarm.

-The reason why Peter fell was that he trusted in himself and his natural qualities instead of God. In the spiritual warfare natural courage and generosity avail not: Everyone who does not rely upon God alone is sure to fail. When dangers are imminent he loses heart, and then all goes wrong.

Causes of Peter's Fall:

-1st, was certainly his neglect of prayer in spite of the earnest and repeated admonition addressed to him and the other Apostles by Our Lord, who foresaw what would happen. Christ had expressly warned Peter to watch and pray, and yet he allowed himself to sleep while Our Lord was suffering His sacred agony.

-2nd, was self-confidence which savors of the worldly spirit. Impulsive zeal is very dangerous. Peter had not learned that natural impulse as a motive of action is sure to lead a man astray – it never avails before God. Its excellence, whatever it may be, only avails in things of this world, and even there it is dangerous and untrustworthy motive.

-In things Divine, it is the road to ruin. We must never be led by impulse if we are to be safe. We must do more; we must turn our thoughts to God, and seek an inspiration from Heaven, if we are to remain faithful.

-Peter did not take to heart the admonitions of Our Lord such as, "Satan has desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat," or, the more general one, "I saw Lucifer, as lightning, fall from Heaven." Even the direct prophecy, "Before the cock crow, you will deny me three times," that is, before the night is fully past, "thou shalt deny me thrice," does not affect him.

-When Our Lord rebuked him for his false judgment of the Cross and had called him "Satan" and bade him get behind Him, Peter had not examined himself to see what was wrong in his judgment.

-It was secundum mundum and not secundum Deum, that is, according to the world and not according to God, and so was his warm-hearted but mistaken effort to defend Our Lord in the Garden with the sword.

-Such a doctrine as that of "the cross and the blessedness of suffering", recognizing and accepting the will of God, requires meditation, and a man hurriedly awakening from sleep will be taken by surprise, and will judge wrongly unless he is habitually penetrated with that which is against and above nature.

-Peter struck with the sword, and this, which was zeal without knowledge, without indication of Our Lord's will, was followed by a craven fear, when the words, "And thou, too, was with Jesus of Nazareth," were addressed to him.

-How different it might all have been for Peter, when told "that he savored not the things that are of God, but that are of men," had he resolved to get to the bottom of what seemed a contradiction to the faith for which he had been praised.

-Our Lord went straight with: "If any man will come after Me, and be disciple or an apostle of Mine, let him take up his cross and follow Me. For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose it for My sake shall find it. He that shall be ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of His Father and the holy Angels" (Mt.16, Mk. 7).

-This was the opportunity missed by Peter of getting from Our dear Lord's lips the very instruction He afterwards gave to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus – "He spoke the word openly" – that is the Gospel of His Passion. But they understood not the words, and in like manner Peter did not see that he did not understand. The one thought – that Our Lord was the Christ absorb him, and he did not know that he was in ignorance of the character and office of Christ,

-Peter thought that with his love for Our Lord, he could do anything, and that disloyalty or a fall on his part was not to be thought of – "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized" – "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee to prison and death" – No, though I should die together with Thee, I will never deny Thee." What a change! At the voice of a woman, of some servants – "I know Him not." "I know not the Man."

-3rd, was human respect and going into the occasion of temptation. It was certainly imprudent of Peter to venture needlessly and uselessly into evident danger, and remain in it so long. How quickly the denial followed on the blow struck for the Master in the garden. What a lesson to distrust self-and trust only in the Almighty!

-The causes of Peter's fall are just those put us in constant danger: self-confidence, neglect of prayer, tepidity in the way of the Cross, that is, neglect

of self-denial, human respect, and not withdrawing from occasion of infidelity to Our Lord. Following Our Lord from afar, that, want of generosity and diligence, self-seeking in little things.

Repentance of Peter:

-The Lord turning on Peter (Lk. 22:61). See the glance of the Lord! Oh, the power and the sweetness of that glance! "And going out he wept bitterly (Mt. 26:75). Why did the Lord look at Peter? Was it a glance of reproach or indignation? Did it indicate punishment or death? No! It was a life-giving glance. Who can comprehend all it conveyed? Surely an earnest warning and acute pain, but also infinite love and encouragement to have complete evidence.

-That look of the Lord was a great and powerful grace, a glance full of the infinite mercy of God, Who makes in a single moment saints of sinners, and apostles of deniers and persecutors.

-Peter now saw the awful chasm into which he had fallen, but he also saw the Hand outstretched to help him, so he seized it as he once had done on the Sea of Galilee, and it drew him out.

-He thought of the words the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the cock crow, Thou shalt deny me three times" (Lk. 22:61); and, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (Lk. 22:32).

-This was the part the Lord took in Peter's repentance. The rest was for Peter to do: and he did it, perfectly and completely. Peter was struck to the heart, he would never again forget that look of the Lord. He realized how greatly he had sinned against the One who had warned him so faithfully and so earnestly. See him as he gives vent to his tears and contrition, he goes to seek the Mother of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Mercy.

-Our Lord had to bear the grief of humiliation of His dear disciple's denial. The fact that He foresaw Peter's denial did not lessen its bitterness. Why did Our Lord permit this fall of Peter? **1st**, to comfort His own followers in future ages when forsaken and denied by friends. **2nd**, to warn us against rashness and over-estimation of ourselves, and never to trust love that is not humble and discreet; it only makes us unhappy. **3rd**, to teach us to trust Our Lord and hold fast to Him in all circumstances. These are some of the lessons we can learn from Our Lord's look and loving mercy.

-What a contrast between Peter's confidence and love and Judas' despair. It will help us to greater love and trust to dwell on St. Peter's tender sorrow, perfect confidence, and self-humiliation, not a shade of distrust towards his dear Master.

-This was a consequence of his intimate knowledge of Our Lord. Peter knew the Lord, he knew of his Master, but Judas was ignorant of Him. Peter learned confidence under the circumstances in which Judas failed to learn it. So, Peter knew what to do when he found himself deep in sin that he never dreamed he could commit.

-If Judas had turned at Our Lord's look and reproach, "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" he might have become a saint like the other Apostle. But Judas did not know his way to the heart of Our Lord; he had been attending to himself instead of His Master, and he was ignorant of the Lord's Heart and its tenderness, after his long intimacy with Him.

-Alas, that those who see the Lord every day, who know Him, and His words and deeds, who even receive Him frequently, may know nothing of Him to their soul's good.

-The circumstances of Peter's conversion will help to dispose us for confession. Peter's sorrow was intense, and lasted all his life. He never forgot that instead of having been a comfort to his beloved Master as John had been, he had wounded His Heart.

-Where did Peter seek to help after his fall? He flew to the Blessed Mother of the Lord – the Refuge of sinners, the comforter of the afflicted. The Blessed Virgin consoled him by telling him of the love and tenderness of the Sacred Heart of her Son.

-The more tender our love for the Blessed Virgin, the stronger and more intense will be our love of the Lord Jesus. All obstacles and difficulties will readily and easily be conquered as soon as we learn to cling to Our Lord and His Blessed Mother and ours.

-God grants to the soul that lives with Him and the Blessed Virgin Mary the intimate cognito, the inward intimate knowledge. The intimate knowledge is the source of absolute trust and love.

-The sincerity of Peter's conversion is proved by his lifelong tears and sorrow; his love and recourse to mercy; his abiding humility and caution; his generosity and constant labor in the interest of Christ; and his laying down his life for his dear Master.

-Now Peter hates and most carefully avoids all occasions of infidelity to Christ, never again trusts in his own strength. How did Our Lord treat Peter after his fall? With deepest love and trust. He appoints him His Vicar, and the visible

foundation and Head of His Church. Oh, what a lesson for us. If Christ not only pardons but shows the fullest trust in Peter after his fall, so also He forgive and trust us, if, like Peter, we return to Him with all the love of our hearts, and cling to Him with fullest confidence.

On Poverty

-Whereas virginity consecrated to Christ constitutes the central and most primitive nucleus of the life of the vows, religious poverty, the public renunciation of the use of and possession of material goods, causes this consecration "for the kingdom of heaven" to reach into new dimensions of human existence.

-This can be seen in the fact that, from the viewpoint of the Old Testament, and in general of the world that does not know the mystery of Christ, Virginity is a radical and almost intolerable poverty. Sexual relations and the bearing of children are glorious expressions of manhood or womanhood, whereas virginity corresponds to sterility. In this line of thought, virginity is a *sign of deep human poverty*, which leads the way to confidence in the spiritual fecundity of the risen Christ.

-But from another point of view, insofar as it is a consecration to the kingdom, the only enduring kingdom, poverty is an *irradiation of virginity over material things*. Material goods are left behind and, by that very fact, transformed by the light of the resurrection as it shines upon them through human hearts purified of the possessive instinct.

Types of Religious Poverty

-Because it deals with material goods and their use, the practice of poverty leaves ample room to the particular purpose of each religious institute. *No other vow depends so much on the spirit in which it is practiced*, and therefore with no other vow is it so important to understand the mentality, the necessities, and the particular nature of the religious institute in which one lives. For example, the use of material goods on the part of a religious administrator of a hospital in New York City will be distinct from that practiced by a missionary in charge of a country parish. And both are going to be different from the poverty of a Carthusian in his cell.

-The reason for these differences is simply that poverty is a means to something better – perfection in love and in the fulfillment of one's particular vocation. St. Thomas Aquinas put it this way:

"A doctor does not heal his patient inasmuch as he gives him a greater quantity of medicine, but insofar as this medicine is more adequate for the infirmity. Likewise, a religious community will not be better for having greater poverty, but insofar as this poverty is more proportioned to the common end of religious life and to the special mission of the Institute"(ST II-II 188, 7, 1).

-Contemporary writers on the religious life repeatedly point out that external poverty assumes a variety of forms and will differ from one religious institute to another. There are three interacting reasons for this variety:

1. The wide range of internal dispositions and graces,
2. The complexity of today's pluralistic culture,
3. The different tasks that the workers in the kingdom of God must bring to completion in such circumstances. The directives of Vatican II reflect these different factors:

-"The manner of living, praying, and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological conditions of today's religious and also, to the extent required by the nature of each community, to the needs of the apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstances" (PC 3).

Benedictine/Cistercian Poverty

-Since the practice of religious poverty depends so much on the specific character of our life, and this is expressed in a special way through the Rule of St. Benedict, let us see the principal places where the Rule speaks of the use of material goods.

-"Let all things be common to all, as it is written, and let no one say or think that anything is his own. And if someone be caught in this most wicked vice, let him be admonished" (RB 33).

-"Let no one dare to give or receive anything without permission of the abbot, nor have anything as his own, anything whatever...since they are not permitted to have even their bodies or their wills at their own disposals. But they are to look for all that is necessary from the Father of the monastery" (RB 33).

-"As it is written distribution was made to each according as he had need. By this we do not mean that there should be respect of persons (God forbid!), but consideration for weaknesses" (RB 34).

-"If anyone be found to have something which he did not receive from the abbot, let him be subjected to the strictest punishment. And in order to cut out this vice of private ownership by the roots, let the abbot provides whatever may be necessary" (RB 55).

Interior Disposition

-“He who needs less should thank God and not be discontented; but he who needs more should be humbled by the thought of his infirmity rather than feeling important on account of the kindness shown him. Thus all the members will be at peace. Above all, let not the evil of murmuring appear for any reason whatsoever in the least word or sign” (RB 34).

Value of Material Goods

-“Let him look upon all the utensils of the monastery and its whole property as upon the sacred vessels of the altar. Let him not think that anything may be neglected. Let him neither practice avarice, nor be wasteful and a squanderer of the monastery’s substance; but let him do all things with measure and in accordance with the instruction of the abbot” (RB 32).

-“If anyone treats the things of the monastery in a slovenly or careless way, he should be corrected” (RB 32).

“Let the abbot confide the goods of the monastery, tools, clothing, and everything else to monks on whose life and character he can rely” (RB 32).

Dignity of the Human Person

-Above all and before all let care be taken of the sick brethren, so that they be served as Christ in person....Therefore, let the abbot have the greatest care that they suffer no neglect” (RB 36).

“To whom he cannot give what was asked, let him give at least a kind word in reply, because it is written: ‘A good word is worth more than the most precious gift’” (RB 31).

-“Let the abbot be attentive to the weaknesses of the needy, not the ill-will of the envious” (RB 55).

“Let not the abbot overlook or undervalue the salvation of souls confided to him, giving more attention to transitory, worldly, and perishable things...and if he be tempted to complain for lack of means let him remember that which is written: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you besides’” (RB 2).

-“In his commands let him be prudent and considerate; and whether the work which he enjoins concerns God or the world, let him be discreet and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said, ‘If I cause my flocks to be overdriven, they will die in one day’” (RB 64).

“Let him order all things so that the strong has something to long for and the weak has nothing shrink from” (RB 64).

Personal Poverty

-In the Rule, we can see that the preoccupation of St. Benedict in speaking of the use of material goods is not that the monastery be as poor as possible, but rather that it be as full as possible of peace, fraternal communion, and the spirit of Christian sacrifice.

-What matters for St. Benedict is not primarily the poverty of the monastery as a whole, what could be called "sociological poverty," but rather *ascetical poverty and personal poverty directed toward a spiritual dependence on Christ as represented by the abbot, toward a sense of responsibility for material goods, and toward the true peace of the brethren.*

-The task of the abbot is principally to measure the demands of the common life according to the capacities of each brother. From the brethren, St. Benedict expects a sense of personal responsibility and vigilance, with a complete dependence on the abbot as an efficacious sign of their dependence on Christ.

Communal Poverty

-The personal aspect, however, is not the only one foreseen by the Rule. There is a second aspect which is also ascetical and equally directed toward a sense of responsibility and peace – *the community as a whole ought to use its goods in such a way that "in all things God may be glorified."*

-This communal aspect receives more attention at the present time, as the Council points out: "Poverty voluntarily embraced in imitation of Christ provides a witness which is highly esteemed, especially today....Religious poverty requires more than limiting the use of possessions to the consent of superiors; members of a community ought to be poor in both fact and spirit, and have their treasures in heaven (cf. Mt. 6:20)....To the degree that their rules and constitutions permit religious communities can rightly possess whatever is necessary for their temporal life and their mission. Still, let them avoid every appearance of luxury, of excessive wealth, and accumulation of possessions (PC 13).

-According to this, it is clear that the monk of today has an important obligation to embrace poverty not only as an individual, but also on a communal level.

The commitment of monastic poverty can be reduced to three general responsibilities:

1. Personal poverty & detachment;
2. Common life & productive work as expression of personal poverty;
3. Active participation, according to our position in the community, in communal poverty.

1. Personal Poverty and Detachment

-This more interior dimension maintains all its importance. It implies dependence on the superior in the use of material goods prior to final profession and in both using them after such profession.

-This is vital. Often those who criticize the apparent lack of communal poverty, the size of the buildings, the extent of the land holdings, or the use of modern machinery are those who have a least sense of personal poverty.

-If they are monks, they hoard unnecessary things in their private room. They ask for a special diet, special work, special permissions. Without a strong spirit and profound love of personal poverty, all attempts at communal poverty would avail nothing and can be very dangerous for the monk, distracting him from the central meaning of his vocation – total detachment from all creatures in order to love Christ with all his heart and love all else in Him and for Him.

-Thus the first duty of the monk in the matter of poverty is to live it perfectly in his own life, within the community and in dependence on his superiors. Only this will he be able to see the true necessities, exigencies (urgent needs), and measures of communal poverty.

-In our life, an expression of personal poverty is frequently the acceptance of a communitarian poverty which is less austere than what we desire it to be. One of the keys to religious poverty is the difference between what is *useful* and what is *superfluous*. The superfluous, be it private or collective, has to be banished in virtue of the law of universal fraternal charity, which cannot suffer superfluities when others suffer need. What is useful, on the other hand, can, and many times must be kept.

-In order to be sensitive to the dividing line between the useful and the superfluous, we need sincere detachment. First personal detachment, in order to eradicate all that is superfluous and be increasingly aware of what is not too necessary. Then collective detachment, in order to reduce community needs to a minimum, living in sober austerity with a simple standard of life.

-We should realize that comfort is the mask with which the wealth and riches of much of our society are disguised.

2. Common Life and Productive Work

-These are the primary consequences of personal poverty. By his vow of conversion of life, the monk promises to live in common, sharing the lot of his brothers, working to support the community.

-We should realize that the common life is a fundamental expression of poverty. The tendency to make little corners for oneself and to appropriate & amass things become stronger with time if we do not discipline ourselves from the beginning of the novitiate in a positive & generous practice of detachment from the comforts that our cenobitic life offers us. A good remedy is to have a periodic examination of conscience.

-We can say that the principal element of monastic poverty is that the monk work to sustain the community. In practice, the monk who is faithful to the common life and to productive work is living his vow of poverty.

The Cistercian Reform and the Practice of Poverty

-A look at the spirit of the Cistercian reform can make us more sensitive to the meaning of monastic poverty. The first Cistercians expressed the principles and ideals of their renewal of Benedictine life in the document *Exordium Parvum*, which narrates the story of the first years of Cîteaux. In this document we can see how important a role effective communal poverty played in their reform. "Poor with the poor Christ," says the *Exordium* as it describes the founders of Cîteaux.

-Reacting against certain abuses of the Cluniac monasteries, the first Cistercians proclaimed their return to the simplicity of the Rule of St. Benedict, with special emphasis on the following points:

Clothing – elimination of fine garments, special colors, furs, embroidered hoods.

Food – simplicity in menu, elimination of animal fat.

Work – This is the key to Cistercian poverty. It ought to be productive, and therefore manual work was preferred. The primary goal was that the Cistercian monk does not depend on the work of others for his support. Therefore, parishes, chapels, cemeteries and ecclesiastical benefices, tithes, and the possession of serfs were rejected as sources of income.

-The work of a monk has a special dignity, not by what is externally achieved but because it is done by a person completely given to God. It witnesses to the fact that the work of every person only has its true meaning in the light of the resurrection of Christ, and that all human work is worthy of the children of the children of God.

-In practice, fidelity to work, with a generosity and sacrifice of one's interests in its fulfillment, is a guarantee of our fidelity to the demands of monastic poverty, both on the individual level and as a community.

-Simplicity especially in the liturgy – In Cîteaux, everything was characterized by simplicity and the absence of complicated methods even in the liturgy. They

sought for a simplification of prayer, where the practice of poverty could penetrate within their life of prayer, reading, or study.

-Here we touch something very close to the Heart of Christ – *Spiritual poverty*. “Happy are the poor of Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” *Spiritual poverty is this absence of complicated methods, both exterior (conveniences, dominion over things and persons, excessive refinement) and interior (a spirituality based on our own effort, our own virtues, exotic methods of prayer, or introspection).*

-Solitude – This is another important aspect of Cistercian poverty underlined by the *Exordium Parvum*. It eliminates as much as possible contacts with the world, business trips, etc. Nowadays this element of our poverty is also made palpable by the limited information that we receive: no radio, T.V., or movies.

3. Responsibility for the Community's Collective Poverty

-This third general expression of monastic poverty is relatively new. Vatican II (PC 13) has indicated to us with a gentle but firm hand that each religious ought to feel responsible not only for his own personal poverty, his personal dependence on superiors in the use of the goods of the monastery, and his own personal generosity in the common life or at work, but also for the poverty of the community as a whole.

-Now “poverty voluntarily embraced in imitation of Christ provides a witness which is highly esteemed, especially nowadays” (PC 13). Therefore, the determination of the concrete expressions of a community's monastic poverty is not only the task of superiors, but of all the brothers, *each one according to his position in the community*.

-It would be a mistake to think that the monk ought not to concern himself with such practical, material, and at times, complicated affairs, or that his entrance into the community has freed him of all that. This would be a false idealism.

-It is true that at the beginning of his “conversion,” during the first years of his formation, the novice and the young monk have much more important and more personal things to do. The practice and the spirit of *personal poverty* must come before that of collective poverty. A period of freedom from material responsibilities is necessary to sound the depths of the mystery of Christ. But this very mystery of Christ is going to urge the monk to become aware of his place, his function, and his responsibilities in the community.

Toward a Mature Poverty

-Poverty is something that unfolds. Like the other vows, it is a talent which God has given us that we may work with it and gain thirty-, sixty-, and a hundredfold. Poverty must grow. Our baptismal grace is ordered to this growth. The vow of conversion of life reinforces this obligation and creates excellent conditions for its fulfillment.

Immature Poverty

-Many monks believe that the vow of poverty is well observed if they have everything with permission. They never grow in poverty, but simply “observe” poverty. And by satisfying, always with permission, their desires to acquire things, they lose little by little that spirit of sacrifice which constitutes the very soul of monastic life. They never really accept the fact that poverty consists in *not having what they want*.

-The great reality is that God wants us to be all our joy. But He will not be able to achieve this if we are tied down to anything. Not until we renounce for love of Christ the good things and the human values that have contributed to our material well-being do we prove that we prefer Him to all else, and that only from Him do we expect to receive all our joy.

Growth in the Life of Poverty

-As the monk grows in the spirit of conversion of life, he *restricts his necessities*. He learns to live with less. Obviously, monastic poverty does not mean eliminating the necessary things in life such as food, clothing, shelter, tools. Nevertheless, the monk becomes increasingly aware that some things are superfluous, that what was necessary before is not so vital in reality and that he can live without it. He grows in the desire for sacrifice. He wants to have less. He seeks opportunities to sacrifice himself, especially when such sacrifice can benefit others.

-The good of poverty is found precisely in the fact that it despoils us, frees us, makes us sensitive to the needs of others, and open our eyes which have been blinded by superficial and transitory goods. It thus permits us to acquire true goods, which are those of inner generosity, sharing, and the gift of self, that is, availability when others need our help. It opens the door for us to the secret joy of Christ's patient, gentle, and humble heart.

-St. Basil, in his *Long Rules* (Question 8), writes that the monk “will deem all possessions foreign to him, as indeed they are.” He does not deny that the riches of the world (money, fame, prestige, success, eloquence) are good, but he affirms that these goods are “foreign” to the monk. Why? Because the monk is a “citizen of heaven” (Phil. 3:20). He belongs to a new world. His goods are the goods of the kingdom made present in Christ Jesus. His wealth is God Himself. All the rest is “foreign” to him. He is happy to give it away.

-The spirit of sacrifice of all that is not God can enter into many aspects of the life of the monk – not only his personal objects, which might be useful, but also his time, his likes & dislikes, his work, even the inclinations of his temperament and his spiritual desires. He let himself be emptied.

-Exterior poverty is essential before we can advance into the realm of real interior poverty. Do not kid yourself that you are practicing poverty of spirit if exteriorly you are accumulating useless objects and permissions, and protecting yourself against the hardship of life by all kinds of shock absorbers. This is not poverty or freedom it is only weakness & evasion.

-Interior poverty, based on serious exterior poverty, is an emptying of self and inner deprivation, a death to self, a disappearance of the “I” or ego. One ceases to be attached to one’s desires, opinions, tastes, everything that makes the “I” solid and evident even in apparently good things. One should desire to lose this “I” this “self” for the sake of Christ. Thus to lose oneself is to find oneself, and thus to die is to be saved, to live in Christ. This should be our ideal. Without such ideal, our monastic life will not be solid. And we cannot really be happy in the monastery.