

DEADLY SINS—LIVING VIRTUE

Envy

Divine Providence

- from the beginning, God entrusts creation to the stewardship of man
- man is able to cooperate with God in carrying out his plan
- freely sharing in providence, they fill the earth and subdue it
- they are provided with everything they need
- man is called to abandon himself to the providence of God
- abandonment brings freedom from anxiety and fear

“The diabolical sin”

- *“By the envy of the devil, death entered into the world.”* (Wisdom 2:24)
- the tempter puts God in a state of accusation and suspicion
 - God’s very essence is to lovingly give everything to his children
 - he is the God of friendship and joy, but also the source of good
 - the love of the Creator imposes a limit no creature can cross
 - the enemy insinuates doubt about God’s intentions behind this limit
 - lies about God’s motives
 - lies about the effects of the sin
- the woman looked upon the tree
 - doubts about the prohibition make her oblivious to the goodness of the rest of paradise
 - first parents let the trust of God die in their hearts and choose disobedience
- consequences are immediate
 - loss of original holiness and grace
 - fear of God, of whom they have a distorted image
 - captivity under the power of the devil

Envy

- defined
 - sadness at the sight of another’s goods
 - immoderate desire to acquire them, even unjustly

- a mortal sin when it wishes grave harm
- a form of sadness
- a refusal of charity.
- misunderstanding of God's distribution of his gifts
 - no one has everything he needs for his life when he comes into the world
 - God desires and designs that we need one another
 - differences appear among people; tied to
 - age
 - physical abilities
 - intellectual or moral aptitudes
 - economic advantages
 - distribution of wealth
- differences belong to God's plan; each must share talents and gifts with others
- foster generosity, kindness and sharing of goods

“The Serpent of Envy”

- envy strikes and does harm before the wound is even felt
- a kind of blasphemy
 - only object of envy is the happiness of another
 - God is the source of all happiness
 - jealousy of good things in another is an offense against God, the source
- corrupts the mind and tortures it
- various offspring
 - hatred
 - detraction
 - calumny
 - joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor
 - displeasure caused by his prosperity.

Types of Covetousness

- *“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.”* (Exodus 20:17)
- original sin implants a three-fold concupiscence, slavery to
 - the pleasures of the senses [lust]
 - covetousness for earthly goods [greed]
 - self-assertion contrary to the dictates of reason.” [pride]
- envy of material goods
 - forbidden by the tenth commandment
 - the root of theft, robbery and fraud
 - the desire to commit injustice by harming our neighbor in his temporal goods.

- envy of people and relationships
 - possessiveness in relationships leads to objectification of the persons
 - a “material” relationship can not be real love
 - the word “my” cannot mean domination and ownership, but must point to a mutual donation
 - concupiscence drives man toward possession of the other as an object.
- envy of spiritual goods
 - one becomes jealous of another’s progress in the spiritual life
 - to be kind to such a person only enrages them more
 - prevents a person from making any progress in his own life
- envy of the wicked
 - *“I was filled with envy of the proud when I saw how the wicked prosper.”* (Psalm 73)
 - feel resentment or a secret allurements to those who are living an immoral life
 - leads to dissatisfaction with one’s own efforts to be holy; has a paralyzing effect
 - easy to make excuses for oneself as long as we are not worse than others

Overcoming Envy

- very subtle and difficult to root out
- The baptized person combats envy through
 - good will
 - humility
 - and abandonment to the providence of God.
- Good Will
 - must avoid the contests, dissensions and rivalries that allow access for the enemy
 - take joy in the progress others are making
 - pray that we may enjoy together the benefits of the spiritual life
 - real charity demands
 - beneficence (generosity)
 - fraternal correction and concern for one another
 - benevolence (willingness to be of service)
 - reciprocity
 - disinterestedness: serve others for their sake, not our own
 - friendship and communion
 - based on a true understanding of beatitude (real happiness)
 - desire God as the ultimate good
 - only God can satisfy the human heart
 - live out this understanding in our moral choices
 - requires purity of heart and trust in God
- Humility
 - a requirement of faith
 - cooperation with the plan God pursues in history.
 - means trusting in God in every circumstance, even in adversity
 - the acknowledgement and homage given to God in thanksgiving

- without thanksgiving, love of God grows cold
 - characterizes the prayer of the Church
 - every event and need can become an offering of thanksgiving.
- as simple as loving God and accepting his will wholeheartedly
- Abandonment to Divine Providence
 - contentment with the gifts God provides and the plan he has for them and for us
 - God's providence is always sovereign and wise, though we may not see the wisdom in it
 - requires detachment from the things of the world
 - allows a total gift of self to Christ
 - judgment in the Holy Spirit reveals the true nature of worldly things
 - the whole prayer and attitude of Jesus reveals his abandonment to the Father's will

Now, in regard to spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware. . . . There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord, there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. One and the same spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-6, 11.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: “God Carries Out His Plan: Divine Providence” (nn. 302–324); “The Tenth Commandment” (nn. 2534–57).

St. John Cassian. The Conferences. Eighth Conference: “On the Principalities”. Translated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, Number 57. New York: The Newman Press, 1997.

St. John Climacus. The Ladder of Divine Ascent. Step Two: “On Detachment”, Step Three: “On Exile”. Translated by Colm Lubheid and Norman Russell. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982.

Lewis, C.S. Perelandra, especially the conversation between Ransom and the Lady in Chapter Five. [First published 1943.] New York: Scribner, 1996.

Lewis, C.S. The Screwtape Letters, especially Letters 21 and 24, and “Screwtape Proposes a Toast”. [First published 1942.] San Francisco: Harper, 2000.

Please refer also to the general reading list provided with the course outline.