

# DEADLY SINS—LIVING VIRTUE

## Pride

### God is Worthy of Praise

- God is . . .
  - a constant, unchangeable being
  - always the same
  - faithful and just
  - without any evil
- It follows that we must necessarily
  - accept his words
  - have complete faith in him
  - acknowledge his authority.
- God's first call and just demand is that man accept and worship him.
  - adoration is an acknowledgment of
    - the nothingness of the creature
    - our total dependence on God
  - worship of God sets man free from
    - from turning in on himself
    - from the slavery of sin
    - from the idolatry of the world.
- the moral life is founded on faith
  - faith is our primary duty toward God
  - gratitude toward the Father leads to filial respect; this is shown by true docility and obedience.

### Creator and Creature

- man is a creature
- depends on God for existence and essence
- there is a limit which remains impassable to man as a creature
- God is the source of all good, and the source of the distinction between good and evil
- the original sin is a rejection of this source

## “Love of self to the point of contempt for God” (St Augustine)

- in the original sin man preferred himself to God
- this was a choice against
  - God
  - the requirements of his creaturely status
  - his own good
- seduction based on the reality of Satan’s pride
  - believed he possessed his wondrous gifts because of his own nature, not God’s gift
  - relied on his own free will as the source of his own good
  - this pride led to his rebellion (“I will not serve”) and his downfall
- Satan shows God as a threat to his creatures and an object of suspicion and fear
  - a challenge to become the adversary of God, to reject God
  - God is seen as a limitation on man’s freedom rather than its source

## The Sin of Pride

- first in terms of origin and time.
- two “parts” to the sin: Vanity and Pride
- Vanity
  - puffs us up by our successes
  - leaves our good works empty because they are done for show
  - makes us sensitive and hostile to criticism
  - leads to spiritual sadness and resentment
- Pride leads to
  - the humiliation of our neighbor
  - the shameless parading of our achievement
  - complacency
  - unwillingness to be found out
  - the spurning of God’s help
  - the exalting of one’s own efforts
- spiritual or intellectual pride is opposed to faith
  - limit acceptance to what we can understand by reason or science
  - we ought to believe because God reveals the truth, and cannot deceive or be deceived
  - faith requires a submission of intellect and will to God
- offenses against faith
  - *hatred of God*
    - denies his goodness
    - curses him as the one who forbids sins and inflicts punishment
  - *voluntary doubt*: disregards or refuses what God reveals and the Church teaches
  - *involuntary doubt*: hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity.
  - *despair*: man ceases to hope
    - for his personal salvation from God
    - for help in attaining it or

- for the forgiveness of his sins
- *presumption*
  - hoping to be able to save oneself without help from on high
  - hoping to obtain God’s forgiveness without conversion and glory without merit
- *tempting God*: putting his goodness and almighty power to the test by word or deed
- *atheism*: a false conception of human autonomy, refusing any dependence on God.

## Humility

- based on a realistic understanding of our status as creatures
- man and the world depend on God for everything
- a “*quid pro quo*” with God is ridiculous
- Jesus acknowledges that he “cannot do anything by [him]self” and gives an example of obedience to the Father
- even the body and the soul are gifts from God
- understanding our sinfulness makes us recognize our need for God
- because of our sins we deserve no praise from others

## Correcting Pride

- do nothing for the sake of getting attention
- stay focused on the work we have begun
- reject anything that would draw attention to ourselves—shun singularity
- the Lord desires simplicity of heart and a docile spirit
- God often allows us to fall into temptations and sin to correct our pride
  - our falls should not surprise us
  - should remind us of our weakness and pride, and of our need for God’s help
- obedience
  - a mortification of the reasoning power
  - a shortcut to holiness
  - to follow someone else’s will rather than our own avoids vanity
- learn to accept correction and even mockery peacefully
  - requires a cheerful spirit
  - must learn to overcome touchiness and oversensitivity

## Four Rules for Humility

- *spernere nullum*: Think little of no person.
- *spernere mundum*: Think little of the world.
- *spernere seipsum*: Think little of yourself.
  - God does not need us
  - all the good in us comes from God

- “escape your own cleverness”—remember that talents come from God and don’t show off as if they were your own
- never speak about yourself in a complimentary way
- never speak about your accomplishments
- keep God’s gifts and inspirations to yourself
- *spernere spemi:* Think little of being thought little of.
  - no one can see his own faults as clearly as his neighbor does
  - correction should be welcomed with gratitude as a chance to grow
    - even unjust criticism should be answered with cheerfulness
    - anger and sadness can lead to worse harm than the fault being criticized
  - never defend yourself, even when what is said is untrue
  - don’t worry if someone takes the credit for our good action: God will repay us

### Signs of Humility

- The delighted readiness of the soul
  - to accept indignity,
  - to receive it with open arms,
  - to welcome it as something that relieves and cauterizes diseases of the soul and grievous sins.
- The wiping out of anger—and modesty over the fact that it has subsided.  
The honest distrust of one’s own virtues, together with an unending desire to learn more.
- The man with humility for his bride will be
  - gentle, kind
  - inclined to compunction
  - sympathetic
  - calm in every situation
  - radiant
  - easy to get along with
  - inoffensive
  - alert and active.In a word, free from passion.

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourself, each looking out not for his own interests, but everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus, who . . . humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you . . . Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world, as you hold on to the word of life.

Philippians 2:3–5, 8, 13–16.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The First Commandment” (nn. 2084–2141)

St. John Cassian. The Institutes. Book Eleven: “The Spirit of Vainglory”, Book Twelve: “The Spirit of Pride”. Translated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P. Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, Number 58. New York: The Newman Press, 2000.

St. John Climacus. The Ladder of Divine Ascent. Step Twenty-two: “On Vainglory”, Step Twenty-three: “On Pride”, Step Twenty-four: “On Meekness, Simplicity, Guilelessness and Wickedness”, and Step Twenty-five: “On Humility”. Translated by Colm Lubheid and Norman Russell. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982.

Lewis, C.S. Mere Christianity, Book Three, Chapter Eight: “The Great Sin”. [First published 1952.] San Francisco: Harper, 2000.

Lewis, C.S. The Screwtape Letters, especially Letters 14, 24, 27 [First published 1942.] San Francisco: Harper, 2000.

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