

DEADLY SINS—LIVING VIRTUE

Conclusion

Interior Conversion

- conversion requires
 - a radical reorientation of our whole life
 - a return
 - a conversion to God with all our heart
 - an end of sin
 - a turning away from evil
 - with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed
- must include the desire and resolution to change one's life
- hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace
- accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness: "affliction of spirit", "repentance of heart."
- a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him.
- urges expression in visible signs, gestures and works of penance.

Confession

- different names for this sacrament highlight various parts of it
 - conversion
 - penance
 - confession
 - forgiveness
 - reconciliation
- acts of the penitent
 - contrition
 - two types
 - perfect: based on the love of God alone
 - imperfect (*attrition*): based on repugnance to sin, fear of punishment
 - presupposes an examination of conscience
 - confession
 - frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others
 - through confession one
 - looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of,
 - takes responsibility for them,

- and thereby opens himself again to God, and to the communion of the Church
- in order to make a new future possible
- best to confess our worst/most shameful sins first
- must never conceal a sin in confession
 - all mortal sins should be confessed specifically:
 - by name
 - by number or frequency of occasions
 - including any circumstances that make it more grave
 - should frequently confess venial sins—this will help us to
 - form our conscience
 - fight against evil tendencies
 - let ourselves be healed by Christ
 - progress in the life of the Spirit
- satisfaction
 - absolution does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused
 - the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something to make amends
- fruits of the sacrament
 - reconciliation
 - peace, serenity, consolation
 - “spiritual resurrection”
 - restoration of dignity and blessings
 - restoration of friendship with God.
- frequent Confession
 - “one of the very best means of obtaining humility” (St Philip)
 - essential to overcoming bad habits
 - helps to have fixed times and stick to them
 - relationship with the confessor acts as a “bridle” against future sins (The Ladder)

Spiritual Direction

- part of the desert tradition
 - frequent confession with a regular confessor
 - learn to reveal all sins and all temptations to the director
 - never conceal anything out of pride or embarrassment
 - “As soon as a wicked thought has been revealed it loses its power” (The Ladder)
- submit to the director’s discernment and evaluation
 - discern between trials and temptation; between being tempted and consenting to temptation
 - unmasks the lie of temptation
 - a gift of the Holy Spirit
- requires a careful choice of director
 - should be learned and discreet
 - should demonstrate experience in the spiritual life, and a serious effort to live a holy life

- should follow the traditions of the Church and of the saints rather than his own innovation
- the choice requires thought, prayer and time
- once the choice we ought not to change except for most serious reasons
 - learn to accept advice even when it goes against the grain
 - stay committed even when we notice the director's weaknesses

The Holy Eucharist

- a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father (εὐχαριστεῖν means "thanksgiving")
 - the whole Church is united with the offering of Christ
 - the lives of the faithful
 - their praise, sufferings, prayer and work
 - life of the Christian acquires a new value.
- fruits of Holy Communion
 - augments our union with Jesus Christ.
 - preserves, increases and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.
 - separates us from sin
 - "The Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from our past sins and preserving us from future sins." (CCC 1393)
 - wipes away venial sins.
 - preserves us from future mortal sins
 - "provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ." (St Ambrose)
- frequent Communion
 - should make effort to attend as often as possible, and even every day
 - strive to always be prepared to receive Communion worthily
 - ask for the remedy for the vice to which we are most inclined
 - the Real Presence of Jesus means that He dwells in us and fights against sin in us
 - the most effective weapon in the spiritual combat

Prayer

- "There is nothing the devil fears so much, or so much tries to hinder, as prayer."
"A man without prayer is an animal without the use of reason." (St Philip)
- need to acknowledge our unworthiness and ask God to teach us
 - prayer itself is an acknowledgment of our dependence on God
 - turning to God in prayer means turning away from sin
 - must begin by asking forgiveness
 - learn to dispose the heart to do God's will
- prayer is a necessity for avoiding temptation
- "Lead us not into temptation . . ." means both
 - "do not allow us to enter into temptation" and
 - "do not let us yield to temptation"
 - implore the Spirit of discernment and strength.

- “. . . but deliver us from Evil.”
 - ask to be delivered from the Evil One
 - pray to be delivered from the evils he has sown
- prayer is a battle
 - against ourselves
 - against the wiles of the tempter
 - against the influence of
 - erroneous notions of prayer
 - seeming failure in prayer
 - discouragement during periods of dryness
 - disappointment at not being heard
 - wounded pride
 - distraction
- seeming failure in prayer
 - prayer itself—union with God—is already something good
 - various reasons that prayers seem not to be answered (The Ladder)
 - the petition is premature
 - it has been made unworthily or vaingloriously
 - if granted, it would lead to conceit
 - negligence and carelessness would result
 - requires perseverance, humility, and a willingness to ask for God’s help
 - requires filial trust that is
 - bold
 - founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us
 - founded on the faithful love of the Father
 - expressed by
 - straightforward simplicity
 - filial trust
 - joyous assurance
 - humble boldness
 - the certainty of being loved
- rules for effective prayer (Scupoli)
 1. We must sincerely desire to serve God.
 2. We must have a vibrant, living faith and a firm confidence in being heard.
 3. Our motive for prayer must be the will of God rather than self-will.
 4. Our actions must suit the petitions.
 5. Thanksgiving must precede petition.
 6. We must be mindful of the merits of Jesus’ passion and Resurrection.
 7. We must persist in prayer and not lose confidence in God.
- need not spend long periods in prayer: short “aspirations” are effective, especially the Name of Jesus
- our prayer should focus on (Scupoli)
 - the goodness of God.
 - the power and willingness of God to help us in our need
 - our need to increase our desire to do God’s will
 - the many gifts we have received that deserve our gratitude

- the life and example of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints
- our connection with them in the Communion of Saints
 - daily devotion to the saints
 - Our Lady
 - St Joseph
 - St Michael and our guardian angel
 - our patron saints (our name, our national heritage, our profession, etc.)
 - reading spiritual books—particularly the lives of the saints—is a help to prayer
 - must pay particular devotion to Our Lady
 - “the dispenser of all the favors which the goodness of God concedes to the sons of Adam” (St Philip)
 - various prayers and devotions
 - the Rosary
 - St Philip’s rosary: “*Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.*” on each bead
 - as Mother and Queen she desires and is able to arrange all things for us (“*nuestra Arregladora*”)

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world.

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him,” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him. This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide in him ought to live as he lived.

1 John 2:1–6.

Suggestions for Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The Sacrament of the Eucharist” (nn. 1322–1419), “The Sacrament of Reconciliation” (nn. 1422–1498), “[Prayer] in the Fullness of Time” (nn. 2598–2622), “[Prayer] in the Age of the Church” (nn. 2623–2649), “The Battle of Prayer” (nn. 2725–2745).

St. John Cassian. The Conferences. Second Conference: “On Discretion”. 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 Cassian. The Institutes. Book Four: “The Institutes of the Renunciants”, nn. 9. 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 Four: “On Obedience”, Step Twenty-six: “On Discernment”, Step Twenty-eight: “On Prayer”. Translated by Colm Lubheid and Norman Russell. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1982.

John Paul II. Encyclical Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church (*Redemptoris Mater*, 25 March 1987).

John Paul II. Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in Its Relationship to the Church (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 April 2003).

John Paul II. Apostolic Letter on Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy (*Dies Domini*, 31 May 1998).

John Paul II. Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary (*Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, 16 October 2002).

John Paul II. Apostolic Letter for the Year of the Eucharist (*Mane nobiscum Domine*, 7 October 2004).

John Paul II. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today (*Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, 2 December 1984).

John Paul II. A Catechesis on the Creed. Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1996.
Volume Five: *Theotókos: Woman, Mother, Disciple*.
Volume Six: *The Trinity’s Embrace: God’s Saving Plan*, especially the catecheses on conversion (pp. 242–268) and “The Eucharist and the Kingdom” (pp. 387–454).

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