

## PRIDE AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING** of things is a necessary step in the way of perfection. The hunger and thirst after justice — after improvement — needs direction; the beginning of wisdom — the yearning and will to be holy — must be orderly; the growth in the knowledge and love of God — the giving of the mind and heart to God — have marks that show the way. To follow these there must be a thought of spiritual need, a meditation on what has been acquired, a looking backward on the reasons and causes of failure or success, a searching anew for the means to avoid the mistakes of the past, while new courage, fresh resolve, and reborn yearning urge the soul to ascend the mountain tops where perfection waits.

What should be kept in mind in seeking improvement? What are those things that mean betterment? The answer must not be hazy; it should not be general; it has to be particular — something that concerns the daily life, our daily spiritual growth, a habitual effort to make perfect the small actions of each day. The little-by-little fall must have a contrary little-by-little rise. So each day in the things to be done there are means of not merely being good, but becoming holy, of reaching great heights of holiness. There are many small actions each day that can be made holy and pleasing to God by purity of intention, by supernaturalizing them, by offering them as clean holocausts to God. Moreover, as these unlimited small actions are kept from imperfection, there arises a growing desire, an intense longing, to work harder and holier: so that orderly satisfaction arises from performing all daily tasks not merely well, but perfectly.

When you look at **the life of the Blessed Virgin**, what is it that strikes you as being her chief perfection. Surely, "*He that is mighty has done great things.*" She has been preserved immaculate. Her soul has been adorned with grace. She was to be the Mother of God, a morally infinite dignity. She was to stand in a special relation, unequalled and extraordinary, with the Trinity, and she was humble. Mary kept perfect the gifts God gave her; she labored incessantly to return her talents; hers was a liberal and complete offering of self. She made a perfect return to God. See the humble poverty of a Bethlehem; reverence the humble obedience of the flight into Egypt; love Mary sorrowing at the foot of the cross. But Mary, the ideal, the perfect, was nowhere so powerfully manifested as in the hidden life at Nazareth with God. Who shall describe the interior of that Mother all-fair, that Mother of grace, in whom was found no stain? Who shall tell of the greatness of her love, the intensity of her prayer, whose life was an interior copy of her Boy? Yet she did not receive the plaudits of that every-day world that looked for the Mother of God in wealth and splendor; she was not distinguished in the eyes of the world for any great, heroic deeds, for no one was looking for heroism in the lesser things of every-day life; still she was leading a life of perfection by making the little acts of daily life the training ground of character. There was a constant effort to strengthen and humble the lesser things of life — things of little importance in themselves, yet the very foundation of perfection.

**In the little things of daily life**, then, two great spiritual forces come into play —

**avoidance of wrong and increase in virtue.** Separately and distinctly, good results may be obtained from these; united, great results must be had. Small actions mean small faults or sins, or small virtues. The petty fault, the frivolous fault, the silly fault passes and the humble virtue grows if one be in earnest. The soul may not and more than likely will never be wholly free from the slight spiritual stain, but the day soon comes when it advances rapidly and even consciously by the gradual destruction of imperfections and the actual acquirement of certain virtues.

**The life of Christ** clearly shows the great virtues necessary for holiness. His life was an act of humility — His Father's work must be done; and Bethlehem was its first-fruits: a God born of an humble Virgin in a stable. The hidden life at Nazareth bespeaks humility. Every circumstance of His life in public suggests it. It was the virtue He dearly loved and praised, taught and practiced from Bethlehem to His death on the cross. "*He was emptied of His glory,*" "*humbling Himself*" unto death. "*To the Jews indeed a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness, but to us, who are called, the power, the wisdom, the glory of God.*" The Blessed Virgin and the Saints took Him as their Great Exemplar and sought to be like Him. The example, therefore, is divine and human; consequently, no mistake can possibly be made by seeking to form the soul with the spiritual character of the virtue thus manifested.

**Humility has often been said to be the one virtue necessary for the attaining of others.** It is certain no soul is going to reach any degree of holiness without it, for it — the truth about spiritual life and the importance of daily right living — directs all to God and inclines the will to act conformably. God, all; self, nothing: therein is the dependence of the creature acknowledged. God, the Giver of all, to whom all is due; self, the despised servant, who has nothing that has not been received. Hence, all actions are to be referred to God; the soul works for God, not for self, not for the esteem of others. Intention is constantly alive and active in directing that everything be offered for the honor and glory of God. Pride would overrun the true order by making self a predominant master, the god for whom ordinary actions are performed. Pride would have the soul take glory to itself or think of the esteem of creatures; that is why pride is the source of wrong in many ordinary actions — the slight irreverence, the lack of meekness, the willful uncharitableness, the vain glory without number, the distracted, self-centered prayer. On the other hand, if the work of the day is directed by humility, the self-esteem and desire for praise of creatures, so conducive to wrong, will vanish; in their place will come the honest conviction that all is vanity except working for God even to the smallest detail.

**Walk humbly before God.** Let all things be permeated by humility. Return the given talents to their proper source. Seek to be directed in all things by this all-important virtue. Sanctify, do not mar or destroy, the lesser things. Pray that you may be faithful in offering all to God.

***O my God! I want to be humble. Thou art all: I am nothing. I depend on Thee; without Thee I am nothing. I have received the gifts of body and soul from Thee; let me not glory in them as my own, but let me return them all to Thee for Thy glory. Thou art the Giver of all that I have and all that I am and all that I do, and I return all to Thee. O my God, I want to be humble in my ordinary actions each day, that I may please***

*Thee in thus doing Thy will.*

**Have we not tried to follow two masters in regard to pride?** True we are not extremely proud, nor are we perfectly humble. We are proud to a certain degree; we are humble to a limited extent. We are following two masters, giving complete service to neither. The stronger pride is, the weaker humility. Is pride our predominant fault? Does it bring forth our ordinary temptations, are we prone to fall into it, have we fallen into it in the past? **“Pride is the beginning of all sin.”**

**Pride is an excessive love of self.** In thought, or word, or act it is a neglect of the fact that we depend on God. What we have, physically, mentally, or spiritually, we have received from God. True, we can increase the gifts of God, but even such increase depends on Him. In other words, our talents and the use of them depend on God. Therefore, we should use God’s gift for His glory, giving Him credit; we should not take the credit for what we have or what we do.

Pride, then, places one in opposition to God, since it makes one work for one’s own glory. Pride is a complete or partial forgetfulness of God. *How foolish to work for self! How absurd to serve self! How unreasonable and wrong to forget what we owe to God!*

**Pride also places a false regard on the opinion of others.** We have reason to desire a good reputation and we should seek to preserve it, nay, strive to make it more and more secure. But our motive should not be the good opinion of others. The good opinion of God should be our thought. How do we stand before Him? What does He think of us? What we do should be for Him.

**The idea of working for God** is especially applicable to those following a vocation. A vocation is a means to serve God better, in fact it is the greatest means to holiness and salvation. Still a vocation is not for self alone. God expects a holier service from those who are called; He demands a striving for perfection. He also commands those following a vocation to help others. That obligation of leading others to holiness and salvation is ever present. Faithfulness to that duty means forgetfulness of self, a true interest in those about us, a daily remembrance that we are helping others for God. Pride would limit our vision by having us think or work for self, and not think and work for God through self and others.

## PRIDE OF AUTHORITY IS A TYPE OF PRIDE

**Pride of authority, or pride of superiority, is one form of excessive self-love.** It expresses itself in thought or word or deed in a domineering, over-positive, offensive way. How overbearing it can be, how haughty, what a “bully,” how “bossy,” how prone to rule things! How critical it can be — “*the do unto others*” is wholly or partially forgotten, the rights and feelings of others are given little or no consideration, for it is mean, unkind, disregarding justice, and fair play, and good sportsmanship. How argumentative and unreasonably argumentative it can be, for it loses sight of the true thought that “*much might be said on both sides*”; moreover, the argument is oftentimes forgotten in personal attack, or the defense of self is continued even when one knows that

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he is wrong, but hates to admit it, and “*e'en when vanquished he can argue still.*” How given to anger pride of authority is! There is no sweet reasonableness about it or in its methods; it is given to angry feelings, to angry thoughts, to angry speech, to angry acts.

From the following each one can determine **for himself** whether or not pride of authority is his predominant fault:

### ***Pride of authority is manifested by an overbearing attitude:***

Have I a superior attitude in thinking, or speaking or acting?

Am I snobbish?

Have I offensive, haughty ways of acting or carrying myself?

Do I hold myself above others?

Do I demand recognition?

Do I use the word “I” so much as to make it offensive?

Do I desire to be always first?

Do I seek advice?

Am I ready to accept advice?

Am I in any sense a “bully”?

Am I inclined to be “bossy”?

Am I prone to belittle persons, or places, or things?

What have I done to correct this overbearing attitude?

### ***Pride of authority is manifested by a critical attitude:***

Am I prone to be critical of persons, places, things?

Am I uncharitable?

Do I speak ill of others?

Have I lied about others?

Do I make known the faults of others?

Am I ready to speak about the faults of others?

Do I find fault easily?

Do I seek to place the blame on others, excusing myself?

Am I jealous?

Am I envious, wishing evil to another, rejoicing at his failures?

Am I quick to see the faults of others?

Do I ridicule others?

Am I inclined to make fun of others?

Do I listen to others who speak in a fault-finding way?

Do I refuse to see the good in others? Do I carry small dislikes or even more or less serious ones?

Is there anyone to whom I refuse to speak? Is there anyone to whom I have not spoken for a long time?

What have I done to correct this critical attitude?

### ***Pride of authority is manifested by an argumentative attitude:***

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Am I prone to argue?  
Am I positive and offensive in my arguments?  
Have I a superior, “a know-it-all attitude” in arguments?  
Is it my notion that others are usually or always wrong?  
Do I refuse to give consideration to what they state?  
Am I stubborn in my own defense?  
Is it hard for me to yield a point?  
Do I try to see both sides of a question?  
Do I argue in my own defense, even when I know I am wrong?  
Do I insist on having the last word?  
Do I argue with anger, with personal animus, with uncharitableness?  
Do I carry grudges or ill feeling on account of my arguments?  
Have I tried to argue reasonably and without a raised tone?  
What have I done to correct this argumentative attitude?

### ***Pride of authority is manifested by an angry attitude:***

Do I easily grow angry?  
Have I an irritable disposition?  
Do I lose my temper rather easily?  
Does loss of temper make me sullen, unkind, uncharitable, critical?  
Do I speak angrily?  
Do I act angrily?  
Do I try to control angry feelings?  
Do I get angry because of Opposition?  
Am I so set on winning games that I get angry when losing?  
Can I take part in a friendly argument without losing meekness?  
Does a spiritual correction make me angry?  
Do my mistakes make me angry?  
Does a correction of any kind make me angry?  
Is it a particular person, or place, or thing that arouses my temper?  
What have I done to correct faults or sins against meekness?

## PRIDE OF TIMIDITY IS A TYPE OF PRIDE

**Pride of timidity is self-love manifested by shyness, backwardness, cowardice.**  
Pride of timidity is self-love protecting self through the hiding of weaknesses from fear of ridicule. Now it must not be thought that the quiet person is necessarily humble. A fine reserve is praiseworthy, but timidity is carrying reserve to excess. Quietness of disposition may not show that there is pride beneath.

**Ordinarily** the talented are not so subject to pride of timidity, just because they are talented. Still those who have ability are not so generally developed as not to have some weakness or other; and even a strong weakness, as they view it. Self-love seeks to protect, to hide that weakness, and so develops a habit of timidity from it. Moreover, the talented are sometimes very much under the rule of human respect. They fear what others

may say or think about them; they are in certain circumstances afraid to do what is right or to avoid what is wrong.

Nevertheless, pride of timidity is usually the predominant fault of **those who have weaknesses and who seek to hide such weaknesses from fear of ridicule**. Those who are governed by timidity are more or less under its spell in thought, word, and deed: when they pray, when they study or recite, when they work, when they play,— in fact in anything that is done in a public way. They actually fear what others say or think about them; they remember things that have passed; they imagine what might happen; they picture improbable or almost impossible conditions or circumstances which will place them before the public eye. Day after day, in many small ways, they feel timid, and eventually it becomes a strong habit, so that they avoid through human respect what they should not avoid or do what they should not do.

**Timidity, then, being a lack of confidence in self, brings irresolution.** The timid make resolutions, but they have not the strength of will or courage of heart to keep them. They feel discouraged because their fears are hard to overcome; their weaknesses seem so strong, they lose hope of any real and complete correction. They do not want to bear the unhappiness that such irresolution necessarily brings, yet they cannot keep up the fight day after day until they have brought timidity under complete control. True, they may suffer humiliations in the fight, but what is worth having is worth fighting for. Moreover, timidity is mostly a thing of the mind. Nervous, shy thinking means timid speaking or acting. If the will be made strong with resolution, timidity will soon be conquered.

From the following questions each one can determine **for himself** whether or not pride of timidity is his predominant fault:

Do I think timidly?  
Do I speak timidly?  
Do I act timidly?  
Have I shy eyes?  
Have I a shy manner?  
Have I a timid disposition?  
Am I easily embarrassed?  
Am I self-conscious?  
Do I recognize my weaknesses as they really are?  
Do I exaggerate them?  
Do I try to hide them?  
Am I dreadfully afraid that others may see them?  
Do I fear ridicule because of them?  
Am I shy about doing things in public?  
Am I shy about singing in common?  
Am I shy about reciting, speaking, reading in public?  
Am I backward about serving in public?  
Do I try to get out of things?  
Do I compare my talents to those of others?

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Do I seek to make full use of such talent as I have?  
Do I understand that God has given me what I have?  
Do I try to develop them?  
Do I bury my physical, mental, or spiritual talents?  
Am I so afraid of mistakes as not to try at all, or weakly?  
Am I open and frank to my confessor, my spiritual director?  
Am I frank to my superior?  
Does human respect enter into my daily life?  
Do I wonder what others may say or think?  
Am I afraid to be pious? obedient? charitable? humble? mortified?  
Am I afraid to keep the rule?  
Am I afraid to be studious?  
Do I stay with the crowd — be it right or wrong?  
Does shyness lead me into deliberate wrong?  
Am I timid about playing games for fear I may do poorly, or even lose?  
If I am not first, do I try to be second, or third, or fourth, etc.?  
Am I afraid to correct others?  
Am I loyal to the Church, to principle, to this house?  
Because of my timidity, do I carry grudges or ill-feeling?  
What have I done to correct pride of timidity?  
Do I keep making resolutions?

## PRIDE OF SENSITIVENESS IS A TYPE OF PRIDE

**Pride of sensitiveness is brought about by self-love being wounded.** The sensitive person is quickly hurt. In fact, it may be said, he prepares himself to be wounded. Ordinarily he imagines things, he misjudges, he misinterprets, he exaggerates, he is suspicious and distrustful. His memory is prone to cling to what has happened to him in an adverse way; he remembers who and what have hurt him. He is ready to see a slight and to feel it. He plans revenge. He fights mental battles of what he will say and how he will act. He is unforgiving, carrying ill-feeling for short or long periods of time and in the same mood refusing to speak or speaking coldly to the one who is the object of his bitterness.

**The sensitive person usually has a wild imagination.** He imagines things; he creates improbable and almost impossible conditions; he pictures what may happen; and always he is being more or less wounded by someone. He feels that others do not make him welcome; he thinks they do not like him, or are trying to make fun of him, or are talking about him when he is absent. He imagines he is not wanted in games, and any mistakes he makes therein prove further to him that such is the case. His superior has a grudge against him; his teachers are not just; his companions are harsh and uncharitable. Seemingly nearly everybody is opposed to him. No wonder he is self-conscious; no wonder he is moody; no wonder he broods.

**How unreasonable the sensitive person is!** He is the cause to a great extent of his own unhappiness, though actually he gets malicious joy out of his sensitiveness at times.

He knows that others realize that they must be on their guard how they speak or act to him, and that very consideration makes him more self-centered. If others hurt him, he is glad; he has someone to be offended at; another will have to bow in apology to him; there is a sense of satisfaction in not being on speaking terms with another. He makes himself feel badly; he wants to feel badly; he gets a false joy out of it. He does not seem to understand that suffering from the right motive brings happiness; he does not realize that he is only adding to his unhappiness — that such false joy as he allows himself is passing, unreasonable, and wrong.

**The sensitive person is a source of unhappiness to others.** He spreads his bitterness. He pulls down the morale of a house. To approach him is hard; to carry on a conversation with him is difficult; to live meekly in harmony with him is almost impossible. Corrections, advice, help, and favors he resents, disliking to admit weaknesses. Innocent fun at his expense is risky. Others have to make more than ordinary efforts to get along with him. The result is unhappiness.

The sensitive person should bear in mind that his sensitiveness **is the cause of many falls and much unhappiness to himself and to others.** All his powers should help him to correct this self-centered condition of soul.

From the following questions, each one can determine **for himself** whether or not pride of sensitiveness is his predominant fault:

Am I sensitive?

Am I easily wounded?

Do I think that others are always trying to hurt my feelings?

Am I suspicious, distrustful?

Do I misjudge, misinterpret others?

Am I ready to accuse others of being unjust, unfair to me?

Do I accuse others of being deliberately unkind to me?

Do I imagine things?

Do I imagine that others are willfully hurting me?

Do I allow innocent fun at my expense?

Do I laugh at my foibles? mistakes?

Do I think that others do not like me?

Do I think that I am unwelcome in the company of others?

Am I unforgiving?

Do I carry grudges?

Do I refuse to speak to others?

Am I moody? Do I brood about things?

Am I hard to get along with?

Am I critical, unkind, deliberately uncharitable?

Have I a true consideration for others?

Do I act towards others as I want them to act toward me?

What have I done to correct pride of sensitiveness?

Am I willing to accept advice, correction, help?

## PRIDE OF COMPLACENCY (VANITY) IS A TYPE OF PRIDE

**Pride of complacency is commonly called pride of vanity.** It is self-love demanding self-esteem or the esteem of others. Yet it is not so much the self-esteem that is sought as it is the craving for the good opinion of others. That is, one suffering from this type of pride is anxious to be well thought of in regard to things spiritual, mental, or physical, so he thinks or speaks or acts vainly.

**Pride of vanity**, then, **brings about a false motive of conduct**, for he who labors for the esteem of others forgets that God bestows gifts of body and soul and that God gives the grace for the use of those gifts. God wants each one to acknowledge his debt. What does it profit to gain the esteem of others, if one is forgetful of God? Why should anyone work from a false motive and thus spoil what would otherwise be good? What does vanity profit? Why not work for God, giving Him due credit? Why make self or others a motive of conduct?

**It is true that humility is the truth about oneself.** Nevertheless, he who is truly spiritual, or intellectual, or who lives up to a fine standard in general, or who is close to perfection, striving earnestly for it, could still be the subject of vanity. He may fail to recognize what God has given Him or he could use his gifts in the wrong way. He could make his motive of conduct the esteem of others. It is also true that those who are far from gifted in any way can be under the spell of vanity, because of working for the esteem of others.

**Vanity does not attack each and every one in the same way.** That is, temptations to vanity may be in regard to spiritual or mental or physical affairs, to any two of the three, or to all three. Vanity may precede, or accompany, or follow an act. Some are vain concerning things they are about to do, or things they would like to do, or things that are unreal — impossible and improbable dreams — that they cannot hope ever to do. Others are vain while they are performing an act; they want to make an impression; they are set on the effect that they are about to produce; the external reveals the internal; they are seeking the praise of the crowd; they aim to attract attention or to be noticed; they want to stand high and even first in public estimation. Still others are vain after they have done something; they think with self-praise about what they have accomplished; they glory in their own success; they color it; they exaggerate it; they speak about it; they seek the praise of others; they hint to get it or even speak openly to obtain it.

**Certainly it is unreasonable to strive for goodness from a motive of vanity.** It is wrong, of course. It is unreasonable to try to be obedient, or mortified, or charitable, or prayerful, or to love God for the esteem of others, though one can desire the good opinion of his superior, or confessor, or director for the sake of knowing that he is doing well and that he is on the right road. Yet it is sometimes true that the vain practice virtue, especially piety, so that they may be well thought of. It is also a fact that some who are leading good lives, foolishly start to wonder about such goodness and exaggerate. They imagine they are better than they actually are, or they compare themselves to others. They seek to find out what is thought about the spiritual standards of others, thus hoping to find out what is thought about their own. They may even have ridiculous ideas

concerning how good they are, and, Pharisee-like, praise themselves and condemn others. They may go so far wrong as to imagine that they are very pleasing to God and then begin to develop peculiarities or oddities of conduct. They grow solemn and most recollected externally, they sigh and weep, they become sentimental, they act piously, they become imprudent in following the ordinary paths. They place goodness not in faithful service to God through daily affairs, but in exceptional things, particularly devotions that attract the attention of others. In neglecting the lesser things, they are in fact falling into much wrong and consequently give a bad example. Their type of piety is offensive. Holiness suffers, for many who are not judges of true and false piety see this false type, and decide they do not want to be good.

**Vanity sometimes leads one to the practice of a particular virtue**, to the neglect of other virtues. He who gets an exaggerated notion of one quality is apt to forget other qualities that are just as necessary. True goodness is the practice of many virtues, the neglect of none, though one virtue be more followed and acquired than others. There are some who are obedient, yet uncharitable; others who are pious, but critical; still others who are mortified, and far from being humble. Now it is not necessarily true that such persons are vain; however, the reverse is often true —the vain person is apt to insist on all virtues except the one he lacks, humility.

**It is perhaps true that vanity in regard to mental talents**, or the use of them, is more common than vanity in regard to spiritual affairs. There is something repelling in being good and at the same time being vain about it. The hypocrite who assumes what he has not, is not so blind as to be wholly satisfied with self-sufficiency; he realizes that the esteem that he has gained is undeserved. Conscience reproaches him sooner or later. Conscience ordinarily does not reprove with the same intensity or even readiness when there is question of vanity in regard to gifts of the mind. The brilliant, the very capable, may be attacked by this type of vanity, by self-glory, by exaggerating what they have, by working for the esteem of others. The mediocre may be attacked by self-glory, by exaggerating what they have, by working for the esteem of others. So may the untalented. The capable who are vain are readily subject to flattery and deceit; the mediocre who are vain feel the neglect of others; the untalented usually think that they are being treated unfairly. All are more or less sensitive, all to some extent are ridiculed, for the vain create opposition and dislike.

**Vanity may attack concerning physical affairs.** The vain parade their gifts; they glory in display; they endeavor to be noticed and well thought of in regard to looks, personal appearance, even strength or the lack of it. Now, there is no question that these are helps in daily life, but their importance can be exaggerated; they can be used from a wrong motive or for a wrong end. They stand for little if character is lacking, whereas with character they are aids to success. Of course, each one should be presentable: neat, clean, and modest; carelessness about personal appearance, boorishness, lack of order, slovenliness in manner or dress are rightfully to be condemned. Belittling the necessity of care of personal appearance is the opposite of attaching too much importance to it by being worldly, going beyond one's means, forgetting one's state of life, etc.

**Vanity may attack one in regard to external conduct.** If one is vain about prayers,

he will seek external devotions, act piously, or strive to make an impression through the practice of virtue. He will keep rules to be observed; he will be recollected to attract attention; he will think of the good example he is giving. If one is vain about studies, he will manifest it in the way he thinks, or speaks, or acts; he will try to make a show of his knowledge; he will have much about him that is egotistical; he will have a spirit of contradiction; he will study and recite to gain further esteem of others. If one is vain about things of recreation, he will assume the attitude of a hero; he will wonder what impression he is making on the crowd. If one is vain about looks and personal appearance, he will show it by the nicety of the care which he gives to them.

**The limits of vain thinking depend on each one.** Herein is opportunity to let the imagination run wild into things possible or impossible, things probable or improbable, and the fanciful pictures always lead to the esteem of others. Vain thinking is stupid, unreasonable, and sinful, and the only one who can bring it under control is he who is tempted in that way. There is a limit to vanity of speech. Propriety, common sense is the check, for no one wants to be considered a boaster or a braggart. One who boasts usually avoids going to such limits as to be called a boaster; one may brag and exaggerate, yet he shuns being called a braggart. So one may lie (vanity is really lying), still he does not wish to be called a liar; one may seek praise, nevertheless he does not want others to think he is doing so. The vain, though very unreasonable about thinking vainly, are somewhat reasonable about speaking vainly. They realize that the one way not to gain the esteem of others is to be vain in speech, for vanity of speech does not attract; in fact it repels; it makes unfriendliness. So does vanity in act or external conduct. The one who acts vainly or shows that he is vain, is open to ridicule, flattery, and deceit,—which means that he is losing the very thing he is after, namely, the esteem of others.

**Ideals are not opposed to humility.** To have a worth-while goal and to seek for it is praiseworthy. The goal sought may never be reached, yet it keeps beckoning onward and upward, for steady purpose and persevering effort must bear fruit. The ideal will be above one's powers and there may be temptation to seek it from the wrong motive; nevertheless when one recognizes his limitations and acts from a good motive, he is following our Lord's exhortation: "Be ye perfect." To do one's best, not to be satisfied with less than one's best, to strive for perfection in every sphere of life, should be one's aim. The important question is not whether or not one is perfect, but what zeal is being used to reach perfection.

Of course, it is not vanity zealously to guard a good name. There is the obligation of preserving a reputation. Humility is a true love of self; to seek and to hold a good name would be a true love of self. Pride is an inordinate love of self, and hence, seeks the good opinions of others in an excessive way.

From the following **questions** each one should be able to determine **for himself** whether or not pride of complacency is his predominant fault in spiritual affairs:

- Am I vain in thoughts concerning spiritual affairs?
- Am I vain in words in regard to spiritual affairs?
- Am I vain in acts in regard to spiritual affairs?

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Am I subject to vainglory?

Do I seek the esteem of others in regard to spiritual affairs?

Am I vain about my piety in public prayers?

Am I vain about my recollection? meditation? Mass? visits? devotions?

Am I vain about my public prayer? Am I vain about my rule-keeping? Am I vain about my prompt, cheerful, generous, supernatural obedience? Am I vain about my charity?

Am I vain about my mortifications of the senses, especially taste?

Am I vain about any bodily mortification?

Am I vain about any mental mortification?

Am I vain about my avoidance of sin and imperfections?

Does vanity enter into my confessions? directions? monitions?

Am I vain about my general standard?

Am I vain about private devotions?

Have I an exalted opinion of my goodness?

Do I act piously? seek strange devotions?

Has my piety made me odd?

Does my piety give offense to others?

Do I love to speak about my goodness?

Do I compare my goodness, my standard, to that of others?

Do I criticize the spiritual life of others? Do I find fault with the way others practice virtue?

Am I prone to notice faults and to speak about them?

Do I misjudge others?

What effort have I made to be humble?

Do I realize that spiritual gifts come from God?

Do I understand that the use of spiritual gifts depends upon God?

Do I give God credit for spiritual gifts and the use of them?

Am I anxious not to be vain about spiritual affairs?

### ***Pride of vanity is manifested thus in regard to mental affairs:***

Am I vain in thoughts concerning mental affairs?

Am I vain in words concerning mental affairs?

Am I vain in acts concerning mental affairs?

Am I subject to vainglory?

Do I have distractions of vainglory?

Do I daydream in a heroic way?

Do I seek the esteem of others in regard to mental affairs?

Am I vain about my memory?

Am I vain about my imagination?

Am I vain about my powers of reasoning?

Am I vain about my powers of understanding?

Do I seek to show my knowledge?

Do I ask questions for the purpose of showing my ability?

Have I a conceited way of explaining things to others?

Is vanity my motive for studying:

## PRIDE AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

Do I recite in a vain way?  
Do I seek to have others praise my accomplishments?  
Do I speak about my mental ability?  
Do I speak vainly about how much I study?  
Do I speak vainly about the amount of time I devote to study?  
Through reasons of vanity do I compare my standards to that of others?  
Am I envious of the standard of others?  
Am I anxious to surpass others?  
What effort have I made to be humble?  
Do I realize that mental ability comes from God?  
Do I understand that the use of mental ability depends upon God?  
Do I give God due credit for my mental ability and the use of it?  
Am I anxious not to be vain concerning mental affairs?

### ***Pride of vanity is manifested thus in regard to external affairs:***

Am I vain in act?  
Is my conduct vain?  
Am I vain about looks?  
Am I vain about my personal appearance?  
Am I vain in the way I walk?  
Am I vain in the way I speak?  
Is my manner vain?  
Do the very tones of my voice reveal vanity?  
Am I vain about health? strength?  
Am I vain about my reading in public?  
Am I vain about reciting in public?  
Am I vain about singing?  
Am I vain in the display of my talents?  
Am I vain in my games?  
Do I play to make an impression on others?  
Is my attitude in games one of vanity?  
Do I seek praise?  
Am I anxious to be humble?  
Do I give God credit for His gifts?  
Do I try to use these gifts in the right way?  
Do I strive to give God credit for the use of His gifts?

**Prayer changes pride to humility.** Too often it is thought that the gaining of a virtue depends on human effort alone. Grace is necessary to acquire virtue and grace comes through prayer. Surely we understand that God is willing to help us, for He wants us to be humble. Pray for humility, then, as though all depended on prayer; labor for humility, then, as though all depended on human effort alone.

Meditating on humility will help us to acquire it. Pride has been punished; the examples are so many and so well known that they need not be mentioned. Moreover, pride has been condemned and humility extolled; Our Lord on different occasions

praised the latter and censured the former. Humility was the virtue that stood out in the life of our Lord and the virtue that the Saints had in a marked degree. Knowing the above to be true, each one should endeavor to understand why humility is so praiseworthy. Humility is a true knowledge of self. It is the truth about oneself. It is as we are in the sight of God. It is the recognition that our gifts come from God and the use of them depends on God. God, all; self, nothing. God, the Giver of all, to whom all is due; self, the receiver, who should acknowledge dependence on God.

Of course, we should not expect to acquire a habit of humility all at once. Habits come after repeated acts. Moreover, it takes time to destroy a habit of pride, more time if that habit is deeply rooted or the result of long growth. A steady purpose and persevering effort sooner or later must be rewarded. There may be temptations to lose heart, but nothing worth while is gained except through constancy. Pray that the effort be steady and persevering. Keep in mind that God is helping you with His grace.

**Pride is changed to humility through acts of humility** and the acceptance of humiliations. Make frequent acts of humility and accept the humiliations of daily life. There are many details that can be cheerfully borne, not only the slight mistakes or small failures in games or studies or in spiritual affairs, but also uncharitable statements, corrections, and misunderstandings. All of us are prone to make excuses for ourselves, to defend ourselves, to urge our opinions, even with anger or uncharitableness. It should be perfectly obvious that unless humiliations are accepted, there can be no true progress in the virtue that is sought, for the very materials which should be used are thrown aside. It should also be reasonably clear that when one accepts the humiliations that fall to his lot, he is learning to be humble, for as obedience comes by obeying or mortification through mortification, or prayerfulness through prayer, so humility is acquired through the practice of humility, by making acts of humility and by accepting humiliations. When one fully accepts the humiliations that come by chance, then one is ready to seek humiliations. Prudent direction should govern anyone seeking humiliations.

**Study yourself.** What type of pride attacks you most? Does it arise because of persons or places or things? Determine the detail that should be corrected. Do not choose something that is general; do not attempt to do too much at one time or in a short while. Do something every day. In other words learn the particular source of pride that is attacking and let the resolution be practical by making it as particular as possible. Repeat that resolution many times during the day; let it be in the thoughts at rising and on through the day until retiring.

To avoid an overbearing spirit, **renew the determination to kill any spirit of contradiction**, any spirit of superiority, any temptation not to live in harmony with others. Strive to be friendly with everybody; seek to be considerate of others; "be all in all to all"; be agreeable and pleasant. To avoid anger, learn to be meek by repressing the first movements of anger; endeavor not to allow angry feeling to arise; never speak when under the influence of anger. Let there be a constant resolution to live peacefully with others, no matter how much self-restraint is needed. To avoid criticism see the good in everybody. A study of others will reveal that they have good qualities. Recognize that we all have defects and hence should bear with the defects of others. Acquire a spirit of

justice; be fair to each and every one; be ready to give others credit for what they do. Praise when praise is due. Do not allow false judgments to become a rule. To be charitable, say to yourself that you are going to take the full responsibility of being considerate of others, of getting along well with others, and regardless of how they act or speak, you are going to be mindful of the great virtue of charity.

**To avoid timidity, oppose it, act against it, do not give in to it.** Timidity, shyness, backwardness, self-consciousness, cowardice are really mental, that is, the thoughts are timid and hence the speech and acts are because of “what will others say or think?” Timidity in general arises from fear of appearing or doing things before others. Confidence in self is simply a matter of training; resolve not to be timid or nervous, and soon you will not be. Kill the fear of praying, reciting, singing, playing before others; destroy that fear by meeting others without embarrassment. Why care what others say or think? Others may be more gifted, but what of that? Learn by making mistakes, if necessary. Do not place the burden on yourself of being first, or second, or third, or in any particular place for that matter; there are different degrees of glory. Use fully what gifts you have, even though they are small. Bear the mortifications and humiliations that may arise. Just because you are not among the leaders, just because you are not as gifted as others, do not be satisfied to be the last. Be content to place yourself where you belong and try to improve. God expects each one of us to use what gifts he has. The more gifted you are, the more resolved should you be to fight down timidity, which would keep you from using such gifts.

**To overcome sensitiveness ask yourself a few questions:** “Why should I allow myself to be sensitive? It offends God, it makes me unhappy, it spreads unhappiness. I am going to study the cause of my sensitiveness. I know that I most readily take offense from certain persons; I realize that I feel out of place or unwelcome in certain places; I understand that I am quick to be hurt by corrections, mistakes, criticism, a sense of inferiority, lack of ability, small failures, in fact almost anything. I am not going to allow myself to be sensitive; I am resolved that I will not be hurt; I will restrain my feelings; I will bear with that which formerly would wound me.” Such a resolution will quickly show results, and if perseveringly kept, perfect success.

To overcome pride of vanity we should **realize that what he have received from God and the use of what we have depends on God.** We should learn to give Him credit for our talents and the use of them; we should not take the credit to ourselves. We should learn to live for Him; we should strive to pray, study, play, work, do all for Him, making Him the motive of our daily life. Any virtue implies forgetfulness of self: obedience in the submission of one’s will to that of another; mortification is bringing self into subjection; love of neighbor is consideration for another; prayer is thinking about God, while talking to Him; hence vanity should be corrected so as to bring about a state of mind and conduct that has God as the motive. Is it not reasonable to make God the end of our thoughts, and words, and deeds? Is it not spiritual and, therefore, a source of happiness. Is it not a sure means of progress? Then, why not give God credit for what we have and do? “All for Thee, my God”; “All for Thee, 0 my Jesus.”

**Pray to be humble;** let the effort be steady and persevering; make acts of humility

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and accept the humiliations of daily life; study yourself; let your resolutions be practical by being particular; keep in mind the type of pride that is being attacked; repeat your resolution often. Pray as though all depended on prayer; labor as though all depended on human effort alone.

## AVARICE AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

### AVARICE IS AN INORDINATE LOVE of worldly goods.

It refers to the desire for riches as well as to the wish to possess things.

Those who are following a vocation and who have not a vow of poverty are expected to be poor in spirit. What does vocation mean? Using one's state of life for personal profit? piling up money? becoming attached to places or things? setting one's heart on certain appointments? "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." The glory of God suggests prudent detachment.

Herein, however, there is question of avarice as a predominant fault, as it applies to those who have a vow of poverty or who are preparing to take such a vow, which demands a renunciation of earthly goods and interior detachment from the same.

We all have a tendency to acquire and to use things. We want ownership or at least we desire the use of certain earthly things. The vow of poverty does not of itself do away with the tendency, but it does seek to regulate it through exterior and interior renunciation. This very surrender, this endeavor to control a tendency can be looked upon as a burden, or a yoke, or a restraint; a sort of how-far-can-one-go attitude and still not violate the vow. Of course it is readily understood that merely to seek to keep the letter of the vow and not to be concerned about its spirit is reaching for the day when the letter will mean stop on this side of something serious.

The vow is an offering. It is taken as a means to salvation and holiness; it should also be a way of doing God's work better through others. It is giving God something. Consequently the first thought should not be burden, but sacrifice. There should be a generous will in the surrender; there should be joy in what is being done; the gift should be whole-hearted and complete. In fact, one should not only accept the opportunities to practice poverty, but also seek other means to be poor in spirit. The thought should be—not how much the vow of poverty imposes, but how much can one do to carry out the vow fully? Living poverty means practicing poverty. The vow should stand for that. There should be joy in not having; there should be happiness in doing without; there should be content of heart in not wanting. Renunciation and detachment, the more perfect they are, the more fully practiced, are so much more the bringers of true joy. What does poverty mean to you? Is it a burden, a yoke, a restraining obligation? Or is it a generous giving up of ownership and of the will to have? Is your state of mind one that is poor in spirit?

The ordinary temptation for those who have the vow of poverty is not to be detached from earthly things. They can allow their affections to be unduly strong for persons or places or things. They can want the things that they have not and which they could easily forego. They can sigh for the very things that they have renounced. They can have a false attachment for home, for amusements, for books, for furniture, for costly or precious things which do not fit their state of life. Besides desiring things that they have not, they

can become strongly attached to things that they actually have. No matter how small the thing in question, they can have an undue regard for it; correspondingly the undue regard could very likely be true in question of things of more importance. They could fail to be detached concerning an act of obedience, a place to live, a room, things that are for their use, and even in regard to things of little value, holy pictures, medals, prayer books, or even more trivial things. The tendency to exercise ownership may be constantly present; the wish to have things, the desire to use things and to keep them for personal use may be ever at hand. Detachment keeps such tendencies in check.

Poverty allows what is necessary. Necessity differs for the individual; simply because one has something is no reason why another should think he needs the same thing. What one needs is not what another needs. Still there is always the chance of allowing oneself to be fooled as to what is necessary. Reasonableness is one guide; prudence is another; the will of the superior and custom are also guides. The spirit of poverty will be safeguarded if the will of the superior is accepted fully and joyfully. To be ready to accede to what the superior thinks is necessary is to have a state of mind that accepts the idea and spirit of the vow. It need not be said that there are varying degrees of necessity. Some things that are expedient can be reasonably done without; other things cannot be had unless one acts unreasonably. Let conscience and the will of the superior be the guides.

Certainly poverty is not slovenliness. The dignity of our state of life must be maintained. We should protect the respect that is due teachers and leaders. We cannot afford to be careless in this matter. Nevertheless, though we do hold to the spirit of the vow as regards clothes, furniture, the things we have for our use, etc., is our state of mind in accord with our practice? Are we truly detached? Do we want that which we have not? Are we glad to be poor in spirit, and yet neat, clean, and orderly?

Poverty is not miserliness, which seeks to acquire, to save, to hoard. The attachment for things is such that not only is there a reaching out for more, but there is also an unwillingness to give up what one has. Possession becomes a passion spreading even to those things which are not worth keeping or which will go to waste by being kept. Stinginess offends against charity as well as the vow of poverty. To cling to things is to feed avarice. A spirit of generosity is of help in keeping the vow of poverty, for the generous person readily relinquishes the use of things and so has no desire to keep things for self, has no desire to use things for self. However, it must be remembered that poverty is a taking care of things. What we have and what we use, we should guard. Not only should we protect what is set aside for our personal use, but we should also be concerned about those things intended for common use, and so far as we can, we should teach others to protect those same things.

Poverty, then, is the means to keep regulated and normal the tendency to want to own things and to have a personal use of things; avarice, an inordinate desire of earthly things, is very often mere selfishness. Poverty holds in check our love of worldly things; it controls the desire of ownership; it regulates the use of things. Above all it sets a state of mind that is attracted to poverty in spirit. Poverty seeks to make us detached by having us generous in our surrender of worldly things, by having us satisfied with the obligations

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that it imposes, by having us joyous in offering more, by having us ready to accept new and happy yokes, by having us detached as completely as possible, even to perfection.

From the following each one should determine for himself whether or not avarice is his predominant fault:

Have I an inordinate love of worldly goods?  
Have I an immoderate desire of earthly things?  
Do I regret that I cannot get them?  
Do I want to own things?  
Do I see what others have and want the same?  
Have I sought to control the tendency to avarice?  
Is the vow of poverty a burden to me?  
Or is the vow of poverty an offering, a gift, a surrender?  
Do I try to observe the vow fully?  
Am I careless about details?  
Do I break the vow in small ways? frequently? habitually?  
Do I have the proper permission for what I receive or give?  
Do I use things reasonably?  
Am I miserly in hoarding up things?  
Do I cling with too much affection to necessary things?  
Do I hold to things with stubbornness?  
Am I willing to give up what has been set aside for my use?  
Do I want what is costly in clothes?  
Do I want what is costly or too precious in books, furniture, etc.?  
Is my room neat, clean, orderly?  
Do I think in terms of ownership?  
Do I think about acquiring things?  
Do I speak in a way that shows I have a tendency to avarice?  
Do I act in a way that shows a tendency to avarice?  
Am I selfish?  
Do I seek unnecessary things?  
Do I feel badly in bearing the effects of poverty?  
Do I complain?  
What is my state of mind?  
Have I made a real renunciation of worldly things?  
Am I detached?  
Could I be more detached?

**To be poor in spirit, pray.** Prayer is the one great help in acquiring any virtue, and hence it must be used to kill the tendency to avarice and to become detached. To preserve poverty, meditate on the poverty of Our Lord; "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" Above these, and yet with them, practice poverty. Seek to be perfectly detached. Shun in thought and word and deed anything that would be a giving in to the tendency to avarice. Learn to be poor by being poor. Make the renunciation complete. Let the offering of poverty be a generous gift. Let us use what is necessary, but let us not set our hearts on anything. Wish and pray that the will of God

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may be entirely fulfilled through the practice of poverty.

## LUST AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**WHO SHALL ASCEND** into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in the holy place? The clean of heart, for they shall see God.” “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.” Now it should be remembered that by “cleanness of heart” is meant not only the avoidance of serious sins against the angelic virtue, but also the keeping from venial sin and imperfections which sooner or later draw us into grave temptation. Surely all of us should strive to have perfect modesty in all things.

We know what God wants in this regard. We realize the malice of mortal sin and especially the serious malice of degrading sins against the angelic virtue. We understand the shame that is attached to such sins, whether they be in thought, word, or deed. We know that temptations may come, for there are at times signs of rebellion. The mind and the senses seek to pull down; war must be waged against them. Guards must be placed so that they do not fall into that which is unlawful. They can have the right kind of liberty, but it must not descend to license. They should be regulated; they should be brought into perfect subjection.

**The sense of touch** should be *strictly* regulated, because, as St. Thomas says, it is the foundation of all the other senses. This regulation should be most exacting in regard to self and others. What may seem light and even innocent, sooner or later tends to sin and serious sin. Therefore, all softness of conduct, all signs of effeminacy should be avoided, such as, the too frequent shaking of hands, hanging on to one another, anything that looks like caressing, going around arm in arm, hands on one another. In regard to self, one cannot be too severe. The Saints were very strict in the regulation of this sense. They brought themselves into complete subjection by acts of self-denial, of mortification, through the wearing of hair-shirts or chains; they inflicted punishment on themselves by using the discipline. We can and should profit by their example, though prudence and the rule demand that we do practically nothing in bodily mortification without the advice of our superior, confessor, or spiritual director.

**The sense of taste** should also be brought under control. If the taste is unruly, then almost surely will there be less than true modesty. The quality and quantity of things eaten or drunk must be according to right reason; excesses should always be avoided; delicacies used prudently and sparingly. Fasting is one way of regulating the taste; abstinence is another; nevertheless, fasting, or complete abstinence from anything, should not be done without due permission. Still, each one can mortify himself by crossing his taste, by taking a little less of something and especially of things pleasant and agreeable. Moreover, there can be self-denial in the way that one thinks or speaks or acts about things to eat or drink. Mortification makes one reasonable.

**The tongue**, as the organ of speech, should be brought into subjection. The language of a modest man is modest. Speech should have that refinement, that spirit which signifies the presence of Christ; what could not be said to Him should not be said at all. So there should be avoided anything that savors of softness in speech — the use of terms

of endearment, love-terms, the singing of worldly love-songs. The tongue should control any tendency to softness of character. Moreover, the tongue should not be given to false humor; fun should not be vulgar or sinful. The spirit of Our Lord should ever be present.

**The ears** should be held in restraint. True modesty and unregulated ears do not go together. To allow the ears undue liberty is to be careless about the spirit of the holy virtue, for things heard can and do leave strong impressions. Prudence, good judgment must be the guide. What one would not think or speak, one should not listen to others say. Listen to nothing that is offensive to good taste.

**The eyes** should be guarded. The soul must not permit sins and imperfections to enter “through the windows”; nor should it allow itself to become “the prey of the eyes.” An appeal to the eyes is being made at the present day, for they are prone to be unruly and curious; they seek the sensible, and if habit has made them unguarded, they go farther, modesty and reserve being sacrificed. The eyes love to wander; they want to see; they are attracted not only to the good, but also to that which is not good; they delight in the unusual, the startling, the alluring, for they want to be entertained and amused. And, willing or unwilling, they print pictures on the imagination that memory easily brings back. Consequently, there should be carefulness to a detail in keeping the eyes under control in regard to self and others, in regard to pictures and reading, in regard to anything that might offend modesty, for if they are unruly they prevent spiritual progress and urge spiritual decline. The eyes are wonderful gifts; but they easily become deadly enemies.

**The mind**, as well as the senses, should be brought under control. A mind that is given to day-dreaming and wandering, to lack of attention, is not modest; liberty is not license. It is just as possible to develop a state of mind that is modest as to develop one that is otherwise. The mind will not be any more regulated than the senses, so it stands to reason that if the senses are dutifully controlled, the mind is also.

**The heart**, that is, the affections, should be regulated. Human affections are prone and oftentimes very prone to be unruly. Love is a great gift. It can be given to places or things or persons. It can go wrong and woefully; it can descend low and very low. Surely those who follow the Master should not seek their happiness in giving and receiving unregulated love. Their love should be broad, all-embracing. Their human friendship should be for all. Their supernatural love should be given to God. If God is truly loved, then all human affections will be regulated by that supernatural love. “Let us begin to love God a little”; let us be friends of everybody.

Those who follow the Master should seek to be modest in all things. As a great spiritual writer has said: “Imagine to yourself that you hear Him [Our Lord] say to His followers, ‘Perform your outward actions after the manner in which I performed all of them; behave with that composure, modesty, decency, caution, with that fitness and gentleness wherewith I behaved on earth!’”

**Let us examine our consciences** in regard to the following:

## LUST AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

Are my senses being brought under control gradually?  
Is my mind being brought under control?  
Am I growing more and more attentive?  
Which sense should be denied most? sight? hearing? taste? touch? smell?  
With what zeal have I tried to bring my mind and senses under control?  
With what zeal have I tried to make them perfect?  
Am I modest to a detail? in regard to self and others?  
Do I realize that spiritual progress depends on control of the mind and the senses?  
Do I realize that progress in studies depends on control of the mind and the senses?  
Is modesty one virtue that I keep perfect?

There is no fact so emphasized in Scripture and Tradition, as the necessity of prayer. Scripture repeatedly commands that it be constant, frequent, even daily: "Watch ye and pray; pray always." Tradition, the record of the ages, the history of the Saints, the life of the faithful, is an unceasing exhortation to pray. No age is without its testimony to the necessity of prayer.

To acquire perfect **modesty**, to acquire any virtue, pray. Life is a warfare, a battle. The greatest battles have been fought, not on fields reddened with blood, but in the soul, where the battle is intensified by the powerful forces of good and evil striving for the priceless gift of God — the human soul. The history of the soul shows records of success and failure, for souls generation after generation have been fighting a battle that is constant, that death alone ends, and which is vitally important; a battle not against flesh and blood, not against brothers in Christ, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of darkness, against the wickedness of the archfiend, who holds at high command the very elements of daily life to wage the deadly conflict.

The gifts of God can be employed by the individual soul for its own good or for its destruction. Those very powers which God gave to assure salvation can be used to make eternal loss possible. The soul feels the waves of angry passion; it discovers the law of the mind; it finds the flesh lusting against the spirit. It realizes that the faculties of the mind — the memory, the understanding, reason, imagination, free will — can awaken elements of strife; it understands that the senses can arouse the latent enemy.

How subdue the waves of angry passion? How control the law of the members ever pulling down? How bring the flesh into subjection? How combat seductive charms? It cannot be by merely physical means; it cannot be by natural power alone; it cannot be by any force except the spiritual, for the resistance must be superior to that used by the enemy. The attack and defense must be one of prayer. The prayerful man can move mountains; the prayerful man can do all things. No one denies that the battle may sometimes be hard, but only the coward succumbs; and it should be remembered that any virtue can be had if we pray for it, and the harder we pray, the sooner it will come.

Today is the time of high resolution, if you have not been faithful to prayer as the means of acquiring virtue. Today is the time to pray and pray hard, having confidence. Today is the time to begin prayers that will have perseverance until the goal is reached.

To acquire the virtue of modesty perfectly: **watch, pray, fight, persevere.** Avoid persons, places, and things that may mean temptation. Mortify the mind and senses. Be frank to your spiritual director and confessor. Practice devotions to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and the other Saints. Think of death and eternity. Go to confession regularly. Receive Communion according to rule. Avoid idleness. Read spiritual books. Love Our Lord. Keep close to Him in the Blessed Sacrament. Be zealous in trying to be good.

Our love should be given to God. He who loves God has an abiding sorrow for sin, for he remembers that he has offended God. God wants our love. He wants us to render a perfect service through that love. We should love God, for He has been good to us. We should love God because He is God.

Love can be given to other things. Love of the world is ruinous. The world is attractive; it is alluring; it can become irresistibly enticing, for it holds joy, good times, amusements. To give up the world and be with it in thought is unreasonably wrong. God or the world — which? True happiness or false? To have a vocation and to be worldly is to place a check on spiritual progress, is to rush into spiritual decline, is to have a vocation and not live it.

To love the world is ordinarily to love the pleasures of the world. We all want happiness; we all seek happiness; we all desire relaxation and recreation. Joy, amusement, fun are a part of our natural life and should be a part of our supernatural life. Yet we can seek these outside the life to which we are called. We can be dissatisfied with the joy proper to our state of life. We can become so discontented as to make the pleasures of the world part of our life. We can allow a normal, natural tendency to be abnormal. We can find ways and means to go into the world, excusing ourselves by reason of more or less necessity. Let a false love of pleasure take hold and the end is having a vocation, but not living it, and the final result is refusing the hundredfold for following the Master.

Love can be thrown away on intellectual pursuits. Learning, culture, scholarships are much to be desired and much to be worked for. Books are an end thereto; they can be too absorbing; they can develop a taste that goes beyond the proper bounds. Study can become irregular and bring about forgetfulness of other duties. Strive to be scholarly, but do not forget what the crucifix stands for. Scholarship, yes; nevertheless, not for self alone, but for the glory of God, the saving and making holy our souls, the salvation and holiness of others. Learning should not be for self alone; it is to fulfill more faithfully and in a higher way the duties of our state of life.

Much less should our love be cast away by being too attracted to sports. Recreation should help us to keep physically fit. Undue interest is harmful. We should not have an abnormal attraction for the games that we have taken part in or the ones that we shall take part in. Moreover, we should be on our guard that our interest in sports does not become irregular, so that our joys or sorrows are bound in the success or failure of our favorites. Prudence should be the guide.

Above all, our love for others should be spiritual. Love is a great gift. Naturally each one

## LUST AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

desires affection; naturally each has a tendency to strive for the whole love of another, giving his own in return. There comes a time when human affections awaken strongly. Then there is a searching for someone who is to be a "best friend"; there is a seeking for someone who will be a best friend in return. Finally, the affections, after going hither and yon or even before, fall on one and remain there. Similar attractions, admiration, common sympathy, or any number of things increase the affection. True and perfect spiritual friendships are rare; particular friendships are dangerous and sinful. Strong human friendships for those following a vocation result in temptations to give and take signs of affection. Fire burns and leads to temptations; the path is downward, unhappy, much to be regretted, for the fruits are jealousy, uncharitableness, discord, improprieties, lack of community spirit. There is no limit to the depths to which false love and unregulated friendship goes. God has called us to His service and wants our love in a special way. We should love Him; He loves us. He alone can fill our craving for affection; He alone can keep our love whole and give His whole love in return; He alone can make it rise higher and higher to purer and better things. Love Him and love all through Him by being all to all.

## ANGER AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**ANGER IS A DISORDERLY EMOTION** of the soul which inclines us to repel whatever displeases us, and which leads us to revenge. However, there is a lawful anger, which is brought on by zeal for the honor of God. *“Anger arising from zeal is virtuous, but the anger arising from passion is sinful,”* as St. Gregory states. Anger arising from passion is what is meant in the following.

**Anger is sinful and therefore an offense against God.** We all understand that fact — anger offends a person, anger offends God. But we seldom stop to consider that anger has a reaction, an effect on him who indulges in it. That reaction, that effect is unhappiness. Furthermore, anger has an effect on others; it is a source of unhappiness to others. For the sake of getting a new viewpoint about anger, or for the sake of bringing to mind something that may have been forgotten, let us for the moment not consider anger an offense against God, but let us follow the thought that anger is unreasonable because it brings unhappiness to self and others.

**Most persons have temptations to anger.** There is hardly anyone who does not at times become peevish, irritable, impatient; and these are the beginnings of more serious faults. Now we all know the harm and very serious results of anger. There is no example that makes clearer its ruinous effects than the crucifixion of Our Lord; there it had full and fatal fling; there it was a very strong disorderly emotion of soul that was satisfied only with the putting to death. We have also seen how anger has brought families into discord and even permanent separation. We have read how nations have been led into war. The surprising fact is that though each and every one has had brought to his attention the fruits of anger — the sufferings, the discord, the unhappiness — still there is much that could be sought by most persons in regard to meekness and something of meekness that could be sought by everybody.

The unhappy effect of anger on one who is given to it **infrequently** is not as great as the unhappy effect on him who falls **often**. Consequently, the unhappy effect of anger on others is ordinarily proportionate to the number of times one allows temper to be a master. Now, would you not think that everybody would be most unwilling to permit himself to be the cause of his own unhappiness, no matter how slight; and is he not more and more unreasonable as he allows himself more and more to be the cause of increasing unhappiness? Each one should have enough interest in himself so as to take the means to be rid of the source of that which stands for loss of peace of mind. Should not such a one be selfish enough to repress the first movement of anger? There are usually signs that it is rising; if one thinks angrily, he will soon speak or act angrily. Should not each one strive to get along well with everybody? We are not easily wounded by our friends; the very reason that we have friends is that we do not give vent to those things that would hurt them. Should not each one keep in check those bits of criticism, faultfinding, anything that destroys or lessens charity? What is so foolish as to be unhappy, when one of the sources of unhappiness could be cut off? What is so absurd as to make ourselves deliberately and willfully unhappy?

**There is nothing finer than a happy family spirit.** Anger tends to kill the right kind of community spirit. One person can drag others down very swiftly; anger has quick, and often, lasting fruits. How much unhappiness one chronically inclined person spreads we do not know and cannot reckon; there is no measure of sin that is exact; we do not understand the full effects of the Passion and death of Our Lord. What we do know is that one who is frequently given to anger does create discord and discontent, and partially or wholly tears down a happy family spirit; the breeding of discord by just one person can have far-reaching effects. Yet, let us suppose that there is no one individual tearing down the happiness of others in a family; and let us imagine, therefore, that there is no one person given to frequent or serious faults of anger. Still the fact of the matter is that small bits of anger by many could have the same effect of destroying happiness. Considered in itself the bit of temper of one is small but where many are gathered together and given to the same wrong, the effect is large and undesirable. Each bit of anger means unhappiness; unhappiness brings further unhappiness and further anger. That is why it is so important for each and every one to strive to acquire that perfect meekness which makes for a spirit of true happiness. Family spirit really depends on the individual, and no one should be willing to be the cause of another's unhappiness and wrong, for that other's unhappiness and wrong usually mean further unhappiness and wrong, and the end of it all we do not know and cannot reckon.

**Whatever a person does goes into his character.** Each act of virtue, regardless of how small it may be, goes into the forming and final make-up of character. Where the acts of virtue outnumber the acts of sin, the character is that much more virtuous. Perfect character is perfect virtue. Saints are Saints because they had so few faults and those are so very, very small. The most repulsive characters are formed by sin. Satan does nothing that is good. Now it will be seen that sin, since it is put into one's character, must have an effect on others. The sin of Judas had a tremendous and terrible effect; yet it must be remembered that any number of small sins that Judas fell into did not seem to have an effect on others; only the final big sin is taken into consideration. There is really no person who does not have some influence on some other person; that influence may be small, but great or small, it is an influence. Now where the influence is evil, unhappiness will result. Will you allow anger to grow more and more into your character or will you foster meekness? There is unhappiness in the former; happiness in the latter. Will you permit your anger to be an influence on others, pulling them down and making them unhappy? Do you want to be unreasonable?

As a sort of business proposition, is it not worthwhile to keep from anger? Is not happiness worth working for? Should not each one be so concerned about his own joy as to be unwilling to allow himself to be the cause of his own unhappiness? Should not each one be considerate enough of the happiness of others to make strong efforts to preserve it? Let not anger make us unreasonable; let us not spread unhappiness.

**Anger is unreasonable because it offends God.** He loves us; He died for us; He is our best friend. Shall we be so foolish as to do what He begs us not to do? Shall we not be reasonable in seeking our happiness with God in doing what He wills?

## MEEKNESS

**Even temper, the holding of anger in check, is the bringing of self-love into subjection.** Life is such that each one is more or less on the lookout for self; not exactly with selfish interests or motives, but with the concern that one's first duty is to self. Consequently, whatever affects self is thought of, often spoken about, or even acted in some way or other.

**Spiritually we all have our difficulties.** We should not allow these difficulties to affect us in such a way as to take away our equability of temper. Self-restraint is needed, of course, to hold within bounds those things that may be more or less a bother or worry to us. We should not bemoan ourselves to others; we should not sadden or take the joy from life for those about us. We should be prepared to keep in check those things that may be causing us some trouble. More than this, we should be anxious to keep subdued those bits of bad humor which we all have at times. No one is so constantly joyous as not to feel out of sorts at times, and consequently no one should be surprised that such bits of bad humor try to have their satisfaction by being spent on others.

**Meekness is spiritual; meekness is joy.** And we should all strive to have that joy in our hearts that is contagiously cheerful. We need not think that we must be continually joking; nor should we believe that even-temperedness must express its happiness in laughter. We may and undoubtedly will have bothersome worries, but we can and should be even-tempered, retain our peace of heart, be meek in spite of them. We can at least bear with life's small problems in such a way as not to allow them to rush upon others.

**Even temper is attractive**, helps the community spirit, keeps down all that tends to anger, for it seeks under varying circumstances to be pleasant, amiable, agreeable, mild, patient. It is in fact the practice of many virtues. Call it personality, if you will, or say that it is the getting along well with others through a constant and insistent practice of charity. Regardless of how it is termed, it has charm and a very great deal of charm. It is winning; it is friendly; it attracts friends and holds them, while at the same time it makes friendly those who may for some or no reason entertain a slight dislike. Business men realize how valuable even-temperedness is, for it is the one quality they seek to be faithful to. They try to be agreeable to all with whom they trade, because they know that business will suffer if they offend by lack of the little civilities and courtesies of every-day life. They really go out of their way to attract and to hold customers. They would say that it is good business. Theirs might be called the natural side of even-temperedness, yet it could be that they are practicing the virtue of charity simply because of the happiness it brings them and spreads to others because it is pleasing to God.

**We cannot measure the faults that arise through the lack of even-temperedness.** Anger and its fruits: irritability, fault-finding, criticism, peevishness, uncharitableness, spread discord and discontent. Not that anyone deliberately aims to do this; nevertheless, the result is there. It is sufficiently bad that we should fall into such faults; but why should we be willing that others suffer from them? Reasonable thinking would suggest that if others are affected by what we do, then still others will be affected by what we have started. The full effect we certainly cannot hope to measure.

**We should not be willing to allow others to say that we are hard to get along with.** We should try to be the same; we should be even-tempered; we should keep the risings of anger under control. We should not be up and down, joyous and sad, silent and talkative, bubbling over with fun and decidedly morose. We must learn not to be changeable. Surely there are some with whom we live in joyous harmony. Is that harmony, that spirit of unity, that spirit of friendship because of them or because of us? Who should get the credit? It is almost equally true that we find it hard to get along with certain others, or perhaps a certain one. Who is responsible here? This person may have his faults just as we have, but have we not faults that repel him? Seriously and with constant and daily effort have we tried to be even-tempered, have we tried to be pleasant and agreeable with everybody? Have we been so concerned about getting along well with everybody that we pray that such may be and at the same time do all we can to subdue ourselves and especially the emotion of anger?

**All this is very important where, many are living together.** One who is given to anger, who lacks evenness of temper, can do much harm; several could easily bring about almost complete ruin of community spirit. Each one must be convinced that he has a necessary part in helping others to keep the right and therefore spiritual kind of unity. This is a responsibility, a duty. Charity demands it. Not to accept this duty is to be indifferent to one's own happiness, is to be careless about one's standard; not to accept this responsibility is to be negligent in charity toward one's neighbor; not to accept this obligation is to be thoughtless and careless about the offense offered to God through the many faults and sins that most surely do arise.

**Let us examine our consciences in regard to the following:**

Am I prone to anger?

Do I have daily temptations to anger?

What seems to cause the temptation? a person? a place?

When do the temptations arise? study? class? work? recreation?

Does practically any little thing arouse me to temper?

Do I think angrily?

Do I lack evenness of temper in thought?

Is my state of mind an angry one?

Do I think complainingly? critically? fault-findingly?

Am I what is generally termed "a sore-head"?

Do I repress the first signs of anger?

Do I try to keep my soul in meekness?

Do I strive to get along well with everybody?

Do I ponder over slights or injuries and even presume them?

Am I easily disturbed in mind?

Am I easily wounded?

Am I unable to bear anything?

Do I allow myself to be unfriendly?

Am I harsh to anyone? frequently?

Am I bitter to anyone? constantly?

## ANGER AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

Do I rejoice at the misfortunes of others?  
Do I think of means of revenge? of “getting even”?  
Am I of an argumentative disposition? Have I a spirit of contradiction?  
Am I given to ridicule of persons, places, or things?  
Is my speech sharp, sullen, surly, rude? Is the tone of my voice such that others think  
I am angry?  
Am I sarcastic?  
Am I stubborn in disposition?  
Do I take sides with those at variance, thus increasing the differences?  
Do I carry tales?  
Do I cause others to be peevish, irritable, impatient, angry?  
Do I avoid anyone through anger?  
Do I stay angry at others, refusing to speak to them?  
Do I readily grant pardon to those who ask for it?  
Am I hard to get along with?  
What have I done to bring my temper under control?  
Have I really made an effort to be even-tempered?  
Have I striven to be meek?

It is not necessary to state that one can have a proneness to anger and yet not become angry; practice has brought the temper under control. It is also true that one could be internally angry and yet not give external expression to it by word or conduct, though it is hard to hide anger from being seen. Temptation would have internal anger satisfied by saying something or doing something. Experience shows that there is scarcely any limit to what an angry person may say; angry speech usually goes into angry conduct.

When I feel anger coming on, do I try to stop it?  
When I feel angry, do I guard against speaking or acting?  
If I become angry, do I allow other ill effects to follow?  
Do I carry grudges, remain “on the outs” with anyone?  
Do I speak to such a one coldly?  
Do I speak of his faults? laugh at him? show signs of contempt for him?  
Do I criticize him, making him the mark of false humor?  
Do I say things to hurt him purposely?  
Do I speak and act uncharitably toward him?  
Do I act angrily and yet not say anything?

### *Anger very often rushes to calumny:*

Do I accuse my neighbor of faults he has not?  
Do I accuse him of sins he has not committed?  
Do I misinterpret the words or actions of another?  
Do I deny the good actions of another?  
Do I deny the good qualities of another?  
Do I exaggerate the faults or defects of another?  
Do I belittle the qualities of another?  
Am I silent when another is calumniating?

Do I deny credit to another for what he has done?  
Does my anger make me calumniate?

***Anger very often rushes to detract:***

Do I talk about the faults of others?  
Do I reveal the faults or defects of others?  
Do I reveal the faults of others from the wrong motive?  
Do I reveal such faults not openly, but through hints?  
From the way I act, could others guess hidden faults of others?  
Have I revealed the faults of another by word, or look, or sign?  
Does my anger make me detract? backbite?

***Anger very often rushes to lying:***

Does anger make me lie in a joking way?  
Does anger try to make me harm another?  
Does anger make me lie for my own benefit? to win an argument? a point?  
Does anger make me conceal things from one who has a right to know?  
Does anger make me conceal part of the truth?  
Does anger make me exaggerate or belittle?  
Does anger make me keep quiet when I should speak?  
Does anger make me boast about myself? another? a place? a thing?  
Do I say indiscreet things when I am angry? Does anger make me lie about things?  
Does anger make me lie in arguments?  
Does lying argument make me more angry?

**To overcome temptations to anger, pray perseveringly and fight.** Be on guard against it in the morning, and especially at the times or places that were the occasions of falls or temptations in the past. If you happen to fall, rise quickly and with renewed resolution; resolve and resolve and resolve. Learn to hate -the sin of anger and all things that give rise to it. Mortify the mind and senses. Never act under the influence of anger.

**To overcome anger, practice charity.** Pray for the grace of perfect charity; seek occasions to practice charity. Strive to be humble. See the good in everybody; close your eyes to the defects of others; act toward all as you would have all act toward you. Be kind, be patient, envy not, deal not perversely, be not puffed up, rejoice not in iniquity, bear all things, endure all things. Do not allow games to be anything but good fun. Overcome any dislikes, no matter how small. Make a strong effort to be on good terms with everybody; seek to build up a reputation for friendliness.

**To overcome anger, practice meekness.** Guard meekness by practicing it, by praying for it, by avoiding those sins and imperfections that are opposed to it. Learn to be kind, amiable, friendly, agreeable, pleasant. Preserve evenness of temper. Seek peace of mind, of tongue, of conduct by being gentle, though firm and strong. Love all in Our Lord; love those who are not friendly.

**To overcome anger, pray and fight and watch.** Renew your resolutions daily. Especially keep in mind the advice of **St. Francis de Sales**:

“It is a matter of great importance to make our conversation agreeable. To do so it is necessary to appear humble, patient, respectful, cordial, yielding in all lawful things to all. Above all, we must avoid contradicting the opinion of anyone, unless there is an evident necessity for it. In that case, it should be done with all possible mildness, and with the greatest tact, without in the least outraging the feelings of the other party. In this way we shall avoid contests which produce only bitterness and which ordinarily spring rather from attachment to our own opinion than from love of truth. Believe me, there are no dispositions more inimical to human society than those which are given to contradiction, just as there is not a person more commonly loved than he who contradicts no one.”

## GLUTTONY AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**GLUTTONY IS AN INORDINATE LOVE of eating and drinking.** It is the “eat, drink, and be merry” idea. It is the opposite of “Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God.” Necessity and right reason should regulate our thoughts, words and acts in regard to eating or drinking. Temperance in eating and drinking is a virtue.

In our day the tendency is to think and speak much about things to eat and drink. Emphasis is placed on physical fitness. In fact, there are many who practice self-denial for the sake of physical fitness alone. Now there is no doubt that temperance is a help to health; but should not the spiritual idea come first? Temperance is a virtue; to practice it is to gain merit and grace; to practice it is a means of keeping well.

Right reason should regulate our lives in regard to eating and drinking. We should think correctly in this matter; our state of mind should be spiritual. We eat to live; we should not live to eat. Excess is to be avoided, so is defect; to be over-fed or under-nourished is harmful and wrong. Prudence is the guide, for what might be too much or too little for one is not excessive

or defective for another. Let reason determine the amount to be taken and the manner in which it is taken.

Yet one could be careful in avoiding what is wrong in regard to quantity and not be mindful of faults arising in regard to quality. We are prone to be particular, not being satisfied with what is served or the way it is served. Things are not at times to our special taste. Inwardly, if not outwardly, we are ready to find fault. And yet our disapproval may be wholly unjustified. What is served is as a matter of fact all right, but our taste demands something more delicate, or special or particular. Of course, where something special is needed for the sake of health, reason allows it, even though it be frequent or daily.

St. Thomas explains the harmful effects of gluttony. These are: inability to pray or follow a true spiritual standard, foolish joy, frivolity, talkativeness, temptations against the holy virtue. Any one of these reasons should help us to keep in check our temptations to gluttony; the danger of temptations against the holy virtue should more than suffice for the practice of self-denial.

Ordinarily the person who is inclined to eat or drink to excess is selfish; in other words, selfishness is a sign that one is inclined to gluttony. He shows it by his neglect of the ordinary rules of good breeding; he manifests his thinking of self by searching for the best, by noticing what others take or leave; he neglects the needs of others. He may even go to useless expense to satisfy himself. He will most likely do little to mortify himself, though he does pay attention to the mortifications of others; or if he does at times practice self-denial, he compares what he does to what he thinks or observes others do. Usually he makes a show of his mortifications, congratulating himself, while condemning others for what they do. The selfish person thinks of self, takes care of self, is ever ready to eat or

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drink and willing to talk about either. Thinking of self, he forgets others.

From the following each one can determine for himself whether or not gluttony is his predominant fault:

Have I an inordinate love of eating and drinking?  
Do I eat or drink to excess?  
Do I take what is necessary?  
Do I think much about eating and drinking?  
Am I critical about the quantity or quality of food served?  
Do I compare things to finer things elsewhere?  
Do I want better things than those served?  
Do I eat or drink hastily? greedily? eagerly?  
Do I eat or drink things I should not?  
Do I waste things?  
Am I selfish?  
Am I watchful of what another takes?  
Do I like to speak about good things to eat or drink?  
Do I observe the ordinary rules of politeness?  
Do I listen to the reading at table?  
Am I fretful, impatient about delays in service?  
Do I grumble or complain about the service?  
Do I criticize the servers?  
Do I practice self-denial? daily? frequently? at least in small ways?  
Am I prudent about my mortifications? Have I consistently practiced the virtue of temperance?

**To overcome gluttony** or any tendency to it, practice **mortification**. Self-denial is the root of all virtue; there is no worthwhile spiritual life without it. Temperance is a virtue that grows through practice, and temperance demands self-denial. Of course, one should pray to be temperate, for there is no gaining of any virtue except through prayer.

Mortification kills any tendency to gluttony. We can see the necessity of mortification when we consider the evil effects of gluttony. This vice hurries a neglect of religious duties and soon kills fervor and attraction for spiritual things. Necessarily it brings about sloth, languor, listlessness, and consequently prepares the way for temptations against the holy virtue. It also makes serious study impossible. Indulged in to any extent, gluttony brings about proportionate harm physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Mortification is necessary for the acquiring of any virtue. To practice it for the sake of being temperate would be to receive further fruits, for it keeps the senses under control; it is an aid to recollection and piety; it is a means of increasing in virtue.

Mortification of the senses is necessary. The eyes need to be brought under control; the ears should be regulated; touch ought to be held in subjection; the tongue, as the organ of speech, should be held in check. Not to practice mortification of the senses is not

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to advance in holiness and is a sure way of falling into many daily faults and even sins.

The sense of taste should be mortified through fasting or abstinence. Some Saints fasted a great deal; others at certain but frequent intervals; still others at appointed times. Fasting, of course, should be governed by prudence, and ordinarily permission for it should be sought. Abstinence is something we can all practice daily. We need not abstain from any one thing wholly, but we can deny ourselves in small ways and even at and between meals. Taking less of something, being unselfish, being satisfied with what is placed before us, are reasonable ways of being abstinent.

Corporal mortification should be prudently entered upon and followed; permission should be had. The use of the hair-shirt, of the discipline, or chain, or anything that inflicts pain should be a hidden way of practicing virtue. All of the above methods of corporal mortification are useful, helpful, and for some necessary. However, what may be useful for one may not be useful for another; what may be helpful for one may not be for another; what may be necessary for one may not be for another. No matter how good one is, no matter how poor one's standard, corporal mortification should be helpful.

Mortification should not be talked about or displayed. One does not hold self up as an example of any other virtue; why this one? The silent influence of virtue is so powerful that it does not need self-praise to give it force or effectiveness. Silly boasting is not fruitful; in fact it lends itself to ridicule. Those with a false sense of fun will tease or taunt, ask or beg, and may even condemn for lack of comradeship. In our day there is need of common-sense thinking and speaking about temperance, total abstinence, mortification, and we who are following the Master should help others to think and speak correctly.

## ENVY AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**ENVY IS THE FEELING** of sadness which we experience in contemplating the prosperity of others, in so far as we regard this prosperity to be our own loss. There is no question that we do have temptations to envy. We are somewhat inclined to rejoice at the failures of others and to be sad at their success. Others achieve riches, honors, dignities, renown, reputation, praise, applause, success; we see what they have accomplished and we are tempted to envy. Others have qualities of mind and through their use become more or less successful, and we are tempted to envy. Others have qualities of soul and reach certain or higher degrees of holiness, and we are tempted to envy. It should be remembered that what those others have, we regard as our own loss. It is hard for us to rejoice whole-heartedly at the success of others; it is easy for us to feel glad at their failures.

Envy will try to show itself in some of the following ways:

Do I feel sad at the prosperity of others?  
At their success in games? In athletics?  
Do I rejoice at their failures?  
Do I envy the riches of others?  
Do I envy their honors? dignities? power? renown? reputation?  
Do I envy the applause given to them?  
Do I envy another's intellectual qualities?  
Do I envy his imagination? memory? power of reasoning? understanding?  
Do I envy his general ability?  
Do I envy his learning?  
Do I envy his scholarship?  
Do I envy another spiritually?  
Do I envy his prayerfulness?  
Do I envy his rule-keeping?  
Do I envy his practice of virtue?  
Do I envy his obedience? humility? mortification? love of God?  
Do I envy his goodness? his zeal in striving for it?  
Does envy make me hate or dislike others?  
Does envy make me detract? calumniate? find fault?  
Does envy make me unfair? misjudge? misinterpret?  
Does envy make me compare myself to others?  
Do I try to rejoice at the success of others?  
Do I try to be sorry at their failures?  
What have I done not to envy in a small way?

To avoid envy, let us pray. Let us practice self-denial, while striving to increase in humility and charity. Let us see the good in everybody. Let us want all to do well. Let us rejoice with others and sorrow with them. Let us realize that we gain nothing by being envious; in fact we lose merit and grace. Let us thank God for whatever good is done, no

matter who does it.

To avoid envy, let us be reasonable. God has given us certain physical, mental, and spiritual talents. He expects us to use them, to increase in them, to bring them back multiplied. He has a place in life for us; He gives us the grace to fill that place; we please Him in accepting His will and following it. What He has allowed others is no concern of ours; they have their duties and obligations. So it is unreasonable and sinful to deplore the gifts of God; it is sinful and unreasonable to deplore what others have, believing that the prosperity of others is our loss. We should live up to our physical, mental, and spiritual talents and be assured that we are doing the will of God.

We should have charity for the manual labor of others. Manual labor is a necessity. The ability brought to it differs; all are not suited to the particular tasks which they are called upon to do. Consequently, what is accomplished will vary according to ability, natural aptitude, or training; sometimes perfect, now more or less imperfect. It is not the perfection of the work alone that counts; it is the spirit in which it was done, the effort with which it was done, the motive used for doing it. Spirit and effort and motive do not imply that any set work should therefore be perfect. Yet how quick we sometimes are to accept complainingly what another has done, especially when it affects us in any way. Looking at how it could have been done and perhaps better done we fail to give the due credit by refusing to see the spirit behind it all, the effort put forth, and the motive governing it. When another is allowed to do what we wanted to do, envy comes along to tempt us, trying to make us feel sad if that work is done well, or trying to make us rejoice if it is done poorly. We can be so uncharitable in this regard.

Charity should also cover recreation. Games give rise to mechanical or mental mistakes. Because we are not perfect, we make mistakes which are involuntary, into which we did not want to fall, and which we did all in our power to avoid. Training and a reasonable amount of carefulness should help us not to commit the same errors time after time; effort should help us to avoid them; common-sense thinking should be of assistance. Still, in spite of training and effort and thinking, we can make mistakes. Charity, ordinary kindness, forbids us to find fault, or criticize, or condemn him who does what he cannot help, whether such is due to lack of ability, a learning of the game, or a lack of aptitude in playing the particular game in question. What applies to mechanical mistakes also concerns errors of judgment. Mental mistakes prove that we are human and therefore not perfect; anyone is liable to forget or do the wrong thing under stress. Surely we understand that. Who tries to do the wrong thing? Consequently, there is need of patience, meekness, kindness, charity. Moreover, we should remember that not only as beginners did we fall into mistakes, but even at the time when we considered ourselves as quite adept.

Spectators should be charitable. We are prone to take sides, to favor one rather than another. We are really never strictly neutral. Though we are not actually playing the game, we can play it in an offensive way. We can forget the consideration that is due to losers, we can think merely of the winners, and for that reason descend into ridicule, insult, *unsportsmanlike* remarks or conduct. Moreover, we can envy the success of those we oppose, or rejoice at their failure. If we are actually playing a game, we should be on

our guard not to allow our own interests to lead us to faults or sins of envy. Charity is the virtue of recreation.

There should be charity for the spiritual standards of others. He who is ready to find fault with the standards of another had better look to his own, for the critical viewpoint must pull down. He who would criticize another's goodness is thereby proclaiming how poor is his own goodness. The first concern of each one should be his own duties in regard to prayer, to rule-keeping, to obedience, to mortification, to humility, to any virtue; and no matter how good he is, he does not make his second concern the spiritual lives of others — except to help. To speak about others in a critical way is to fall. We should have sympathy for the weak; advice, if it will be heeded; prayer for all, that God may foster more perfect service.

God wants Saints; God desires perfection. Piety should be held in high esteem; so should rule-keeping, obedience, mortification, and every other virtue. It is a woefully sad state of affairs when anyone is ridiculed for his goodness. It would be a deplorable condition if we tried to keep anyone from becoming holy. It would be even worse to endeavor to pull one down from a high standard that he has acquired. Envy wants failure. There are those who have kept others from being good; and there are those who sneered at another's goodness, so that he fell; there are those who have willfully and deliberately tempted others by trying to make them disobey, or lie, or cheat, or give up their mortifications, etc. Do we bear any guilt in this matter?

There should be charity for the intellectual life of others. Give credit to those to whom it is due. Praise those who excel. Be sympathetically kind to those who are not doing well. Be considerate of those who make mistakes. We should want what every teacher desires — a perfect standard on the part of each member of a class. Let us be fair and just in what we think and say about the intellectual life of others.

Let not their success be our sorrow; nor their failures, our joy. Envy not, but be charitable.

**Father Faber** gives the following rules for the practice of fraternal charity:

1. Often reflect on some good point in each of your brethren.
2. Reflect on the opposite faults in yourself.
3. Do this most in the case of those whom you are most inclined to criticize.
4. Never claim rights, or even let ourselves feel that we have them, as this spirit is most fatal to obedience and charity.
5. Charitable thoughts are the only security for charitable deeds and words. They save us from surprises, especially from surprises of temper.
6. Never have an aversion for another, much less manifest it.
7. Avoid particular friendships.
8. Never judge another. Always, if possible, excuse the faults we see, and if we cannot excuse the action, excuse the intention. We cannot all think alike, and we should, therefore, avoid attributing bad motives to others.

Let us be loyal to the community within and without. Certainly it is sufficiently harmful to criticize within the community. Yet, we can forget our duty here. There is no

excuse for him who carries his criticisms to outsiders. Charity is a community virtue. We are following the Master. We are gathered for His work. He has employed us in a special way. He wants us to have His spirit. So He asks us not only to have that charity which is due to all, but also that special charity for those who follow Him. Family spirit demands it; the effective work of any group of associates depends on it.

Charity should kill self-love, self-will. The tendency is to think of self as the large interest. Consideration for others is second in thought, and for the very reason that we have such a proneness, we are ready to forget that self should not be the only consideration. Self-will wants to go its own way; self-love desires to follow that which is pleasing to it. Virtue is forgetfulness of self. Virtue thinks of God and one's neighbor through God.

To be charitable, we must learn to think charitably. It is no easy matter to keep our thoughts in check. Sometimes we are indisposed, things did not go to suit us, we did not have our own way in regard to something, we had opposition, we had difficulties, and the temptation to think uncharitably. Moreover, our very zeal, our interest, our whole hearted endeavor, can lead us to uncharitableness, for we can become discontented when our zeal and interest and endeavor are not followed by others or not given due credit by them.

It is something and a great something to think charitably; it is still more to speak charitably. Who is there that has not been involuntarily uncharitable in speech? We did not give sufficient reflection to what we were about to say; we used tones of voice that were sharp. This indeliberate uncharitableness arises especially in argument, in explanations, in self-defense, in innocent fun at another's expense, bits of irony or sarcasm or ridicule. Should we not try to avoid even indeliberate uncharitableness?

We should learn to be charitable in conduct. We are all tempted to offend this way; and as a matter of fact, because we are not always the same, not always cheerful, or pleasant, or meek, but sometimes serious, or out of sorts, we do offend. Our changes of mood react on others. They notice them; they wonder what is wrong; they are attracted or repelled by the way we act. Even temper is well worth acquiring. To be the same: amiable, pleasant, agreeable, patient, meek, mild, sociable, obliging — to be ever the same toward others, is to practice charity in a high manner. If our mood changes at all, let it be something more in charity; let us "be all in all to all"; let our standard constantly ascend. Let our charity become habitual.

## SLOTH AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

**SLOTH IS AN INORDINATE LOVE OF REST**, which leads us to omit or neglect our duties. Physical, mental, and spiritual duties are before us daily; sloth tries to enter into them.

**The parable of the call of the laborers to the vineyard** is worthy of consideration when we speak about sloth. It will be recalled that Our Lord likens the Kingdom of Heaven to the householder who hired men; some of them early in the morning, others at the third or sixth hour, and still others at the eleventh hour. And Our Lord, in calling men to His kingdom, is ever on the alert, even to the end of the day. He wants to be the Master, the employer of all men; He desires the service of all; He yearns for it; He died for all. All men should work for Him; sloth refuses wholly or in part.

God is persistently calling men to His vineyard. Many answer the call; they work for a while; they serve God; then they cease to labor; evidently they stop thinking about the end of day and the pay that has been offered. They are prodigals. Sin and perhaps continued sin, failure to employ grace and the

Sacraments place them among the idle, among those who walk away from Him and into the paths of adversity. Still God continues to call them; He wants them to come back and take up their work for Him; He asks them to be sorry for having quit; He asks them to begin all over.

Others also God has called to His vineyard. They begin to work for Him; they labor in faithful service, though at times they fall into sin. Undoubtedly they are far from perfection in their work, but they realize their weaknesses through remorse of conscience, and they take up their tasks with new heart and new resolution. They are good in the eyes of God in spite of their frailties. God wants them to continue to serve Him, for He knows and they understand that future and even present happiness lies in such employment. Such souls, nearly always faithful, go through life making false steps and never reaching holiness, but nevertheless working for Him who rewards those who have served Him and die holily in His service.

There are others in the vineyard who are almost Saints. They are so close to perfection that the wonder is that they don't fight sloth, and work with a little more zeal to reach holiness. If they were only a little better, they would be Saints, though hidden Saints. They love the Church; they glory in the Church; they love the Master, and they are eager and anxious to work for Him, believing all the time that what they do is incomparably small to what He has done for them. How they serve God with that faith! What glory to the Church such souls are! What sources of edification they are to others!

There are Saints in the vineyard. Look at the history of the Saints and you will notice that some never left the work of God for sin; sloth could not draw them down. They were holy all the days of their life, growing more perfect and close to God, the longer they lived and, consequently, the longer they served. Their perseverance in the zealous labor never wavered; in fact it constantly increased. What tabernacles such souls must have been! A thousand acts each day made them more lovely; a thousand unreckoned graces made them more beautiful. God was ever present to add to their wonderfulness. Such holiness is answering God's call to labor for Him without reservation, without any thought but doing all for Him. Such holiness is continued loving service. And what think

you will be the reward?

There are other Saints in the vineyard. These were called at the third, or sixth, or eleventh hour. When their call came, they were ready to turn to holy work for Him. They did not question the lateness of the hour or worry about the reward. Their day of conversion was at hand and they answered unreservedly. Once they had begun, they did not turn back. They set their minds, their hearts on holiness, and they reached it with persevering zeal. The work may have been hard; they had difficulties, and more than likely trying difficulties; but they were big and brave enough to throw aside the temptations that would seek to hold them back.

Has not a spark of grace fired your soul, so that you resolved and renewed your resolution to give perfect service to God? Were you afraid to try to be holy? Did temptation make you believe that you had started so late or had so much to do that there was no use working at all? What is there to stop you from beginning right now to work perfectly for God? Your resolution with God's grace can lead to great heights. Perhaps not to the mountain of holiness that the Saints reached, but nevertheless to great spirituality. St. Francis of Assisi began late, so did Magdalene, so did Augustine, and the Good Thief very late. But it is a question of when you begin. It is not too late to start now; but it will be too late after awhile, for such a thought is to plan not to answer the call to work.

Consider all the daily means to advance in holiness; think of all the graces at your command; what opportunities! Have you not seen others reach up to what they have? Will you try?

The lesson of the parable does not only refer to spiritual things as such. Laboring for the Master includes manual labor, recreation, studies. God wants us to serve Him faithfully in each of these, giving Him as perfect a service as possible. Could we not raise our standard in our studies? Could we not increase in our spirit of study and perseveringly be faithful to it? Could we not show more attention, more application, more willingness to learn? Could we not elevate our standard in recreation? in any work that we are called upon to do? A little more effort, a little more zeal, a little less sloth, and we would be rendering to God the service that He wants, which He has actually called us to, and for which He will reward us.

Too many persons are satisfied with mediocrity. They are neither good nor bad; they are ordinary, commonplace; and they remain so through their own fault. Let us glance over the various kinds of mediocrity and then determine whether or not we are ordinary. Some are mediocre in general. They have a lukewarm, careless attitude about everything. Their standard is ordinary in regard to spiritual things, studies, manual labor, to the proper attitude in recreation. They do not pray well or keep rules, they do not study with any real effort, they work in an indifferent way, they are slothful even in games. There are others who are lukewarm concerning some particular thing; they are ordinary in spiritual affairs, or studies, or manual labor, or recreation. Certain others are mediocre in a still more particular way; they practice obedience, or charity, or mortification, or rule keeping in an ordinary way. They have a pronounced weakness, and seemingly sloth holds them in power, for they do not correct what is at fault; and the danger is that this one weakness will spread and become the cause of other falls. Those who are mediocre as far as studies are concerned have commonplace attention, or application, or willingness to learn, or effort. It may be they have a class to which they give no interest or very little;

or they are neglecting a certain study that is hard for them. Those who are mediocre in regard to manual labor work in a careless or lazy fashion, being satisfied with indifferent results. Those who are mediocre in recreation commit the same faults time after time; they do not urge themselves to better things; they lack zeal in the correction of their faults; they remain uncharitable. Now, none of us would care to be mediocre in everything, but are there not any number of us who seem to be satisfied with mediocrity in a particular way? Sloth keeps us from perfection; sloth holds us back; sloth enters daily into some of the things we do.

***Sloth tries to enter into spiritual affairs:***

Am I slothful?

Have I an inordinate love of rest, neglecting my duties?

Have I an attraction for spiritual things?

Do I make resolutions and try to keep them?

Do I pray with fervor, with piety?

Have I my attention fixed on the words or their meaning? on God?

Do I offer lip-service?

Am I lukewarm? indifferent? careless?

Do I pray as a mere matter of routine?

Do I allow distractions to remain?

Am I mediocre at prayer?

Do I practice recollection?

Do I make sufficient effort?

Do I tire easily when praying?

Do I go through exercises half-heartedly?

Do I hurry through my prayers?

Do I complain about the length of prayers? exercises?

Do I rush on leaving exercises?

Do I assist at prayers in a lazy posture?

Do I genuflect reverently?

Do I make the sign of the cross reverently?

Do I observe the rubrics in serving Mass? assisting at Mass?

Do I have respect for sacred places, persons, and things?

Do I have confidence, humility, perseverance, fervor in my prayers?

What have I done to improve my standard in prayers?

Have I made an effort to get rid of my faults? especially my predominant fault?

Is my obedience prompt, entire, cheerful, supernatural?

Do I mortify my mind and senses?

Have I grown more humble?

Do I hate sin and try to avoid it?

Am I meek, patient, kind, obliging?

## SLOTH AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

Am I modest?

Do I love God because He has been good to me? above all things?

Do I love God for Himself alone?

Is there any virtue in which I am mediocre?

Do I commit venial sins?

Do I fall into deliberate imperfections? what about my rule-keeping?

Do I want to be perfect?

Have I perseveringly tried to improve?

### ***Sloth tries to enter into mental affairs:***

Am I slothful in regard to studies?

Do I make an effort to study?

Do I waste time?

Do I allow distractions to remain?

Do I grow tired easily?

Do I seek excuses to get out of studying or the work assigned?

Do I get merely the work assigned? or is it my best effort?

Do I copy? cheat on a quiz or examination?

Am I careless? indifferent?

Do I try to make my work neat? correct? accurate?

Do I neglect any class?

Do I realize that perfect silence helps me study?

Am I diligent in the preparation of my classes?

Do I control my eyes? ears? tongue?

What is my standard in class?

Do I lack diligence?

Do I lack attention?

Am I willing to learn?

Am I obedient?

Am I humble about my talents, work, answers, conduct?

Do I keep silence? Do I prompt? make signs? throw notes?

Am I guilty of frivolity?

Do I ask questions without thinking?

Do I put too much time on one class, neglecting others?

What zeal have I used to acquire a spirit of study?

Do I try to be faithful to my studies?

### ***Sloth tries to show itself in deed:***

Do I act lazily?

## SLOTH AS A PREDOMINANT FAULT

Am I too fond of rest?  
Do I take lazy positions in answering prayers?  
Do I kneel in a lounging way?  
Do I walk in a lazy way?  
Am I too deliberate in the way I do things?  
Do I act promptly, whole-heartedly, cheerfully, supernaturally?  
Do I do things poorly, sluggishly, remissly?  
Am I changeable? fickle? tiring of something quickly?  
Do I delight in idle conversation?  
Have I a lazy way of speaking?  
Do I dress slovenly?  
Do I choose the company of those who are not doing well?  
What is my standard in recreation?  
Is my conduct sportsmanlike?  
Am I careless about modesty, charity, truthfulness?  
Am I indifferent to a standard that is honest, just, fair?  
Am I mediocre about meekness?  
Is there any virtue that I practice in a mediocre way in recreation?  
What have I done not to be slothful in deed?  
Could I do more?

Do we do all to please God? Is this our motive for manual labor? If it is, we work promptly, cheerfully, whole-heartedly; we plan our work and do it orderly; there is nothing slip-shod about it; there is nothing, be it ever so slight, that is willfully left undone; we do a finished bit of work.

Zeal in studies can be acquired. Zeal demands attention; attention grows through practice; so does application; and these ordinarily foster a desire to learn. Now as never before the world needs learned, intellectual leaders who are guided by Catholic principles. Therefore, we who are following a vocation should use every opportunity to acquire a true spirit of study, for the more mentally developed we are, the greater will be our work for God.

Zeal in spiritual affairs can be acquired. Tepidity can be overcome by persevering effort. Perfection should be our goal, even though we never reach it. To try to keep rules perfectly is soon to love to keep rules; to labor to be free from venial sin is quickly to be working against imperfection; to acquire virtue is to set the mind on the important virtues — humility, mortification, piety, obedience, love of neighbor and God — practicing them daily. To be attentive in prayer, be faithful in getting rid of distractions that arise in the making of the regular exercises; to be fervent, keep trying to be fervent. Have confidence in persevering prayer.

Do not lose heart in fighting against sloth. Repeat your resolutions frequently during the day. Prayer and effort are the means to success. We are not working alone: God's grace is with us, if we ask for it. Let us ask for it perseveringly.