

**Reading the Catholic Classics Together**  
**Introduction to the Devout Life**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Chapters</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>September 13, 2021</b>	<b>Introduction to the Author, Text and Spirituality (Preface as review)</b>	
<b>PART 1</b>		
<b>EXERCISES AND SACRAMENTS</b>		
<i>Counsels and Exercises for the Guidance of the Soul from Its First Desire After a Devout Life until a Full Resolution of Pursuing the Same</i>		
<b>September 20, 2021</b>	<b>Preface, Part 1, Chapters 1-22</b>	<b>Pages 1-36</b>
<b>PART 2</b>		
<b>SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER</b>		
<i>Counsels as to Uplifting the Soul to God in Prayer and the Use of the Sacraments</i>		
<b>September 27, 2021</b>	<b>Part 2, Chapter 1-21</b>	<b>Pages 37-68</b>
<b>PART 3</b>		
<b>PRACTICE OF VIRTUE</b>		
<i>Counsels Concerning the Practice of Virtue</i>		
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<b>October 11, 2021</b>	<b>Part 3, Chapters 1-24</b>	<b>Pages 96-123</b>
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<b>PART 4</b>		
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<i>Counsels Concerning Some Ordinary Temptations</i>		
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**October 11, 2021**

### **Obedience**

- Evangelical councils of obedience, chastity, and poverty.
- Obedience is a consecration of the heart, chastity of the body and poverty of all worldly goods to the love and service of God. They are the spiritual cross on which is raised on the fourth, which is humility
- Lay should take them as ordinary vows or at least practiced diligently
- Two kinds of obedience, necessary (humble obedience to your superior, pope, clergy, kings, government, parents, you cannot free yourself from the duty obey them) and voluntary (
- Necessary obedience, there is no great virtue in that it is our duty, but great harm in disobedience. The perfection of obedience comes in obeying in hard, disagreeable and inconvenient things.
- Obey quietly, without answering again, promptly, cheerfully, in loving obedience for Christ who became obedient even to the death of the cross
- Obedience to superiors, yield to your equals, giving way to their opinions when nothing wrong is involved, without arguing, and adapt yourself easily to the wishes of your inferiors as far as you can. Do not have stern authority as long as they do well
- Voluntary obedience we take on by choice, no imposed, confessor director,

### **Purity**

- There is no beauty without purity
- Those in widowhood need a brave chastity, including resisting the memories of the past with a happy married life which weakens the will
- Unmarried need simple sensitive purity, staying away from forbidden pleasures
- Married people need to keep God ever before them, knowing that marriage is a type of Christ union with the Church
- Without purity, no one can ever see God, need to be pure of heart

### **How to Maintain Purity**

- Be quick to turn aside from the slightest thing leading to impurity because it starts very small and grows rapidly, It is easier to fly from such evils than to cure them
- Never permit anyone to take any manner of foolish liberty with you, even if not evil intention, the perfection of purity is injured
- Source of purity is in the heart but it is in the body that its material results take shape
- All lack of modesty in seeing, hearing, speaking, smelling, or touching is impurity, especially when the heart takes pleasure in them.
- The bee not only shuns decaying flesh but flies far from the faintest smell coming from them.
- Things that blemish perfect purity without being acts of impurity
  - Avoid people who are lacking in purity
  - Seek out good and pure men

- Read and ponder holy things, work of God
- Abide close to Jesus Christ crucified, spiritual in meditation and actually in communion

### **Poverty of Spirit Amid Riches**

- Your heart should be open only to heaven. If you have riches keep your heart from attaching to them, do not let your mind cleave to earthly good
- There is a difference between having poison and being poisoned. You can have poison in your house but not in your body, so you can have riches in your house as long as they do not enter into your heart
- No one every admit that they are avaricious, or greedy, everyone denies this contemptible vice. Men excuse themselves, saying they need to provide for their family, they need to prepare, they never have too much and have some good reason for accumulating more, many sincerely believe they are not greedy
- The sin to wish for something that someone else has – Covet.
- If you cleave closely to your possessions and anxious about losing them, you are attached to them
- IF you take great pleasure in anything, you easily become attached to it, if you lose it and find yourself afflicted at the loss, you can be sure that you were attached. There is no surer proof of attachment for the thing lost than sorrow at the loss
- Do not fix your longing on anything you do not have, do not let your hear rest in that which you have and do not grieve over anything that lose

### **How to Exercise Real Poverty, Although Actually Rich**

- Possession are not ours – God has given them to us to cultivate, to make the fruitful, profitable in his service and to please him
- Self-love is restless, anxious, over-eager, troubled, unsatisfactory, love of God is calm, peaceful, tranquil, and done for its sake, even in worldly things is gentle, trustful and quiet
- Let us take quiet care to preserve, and where possible, increase our temporal good according to the duties of our position. BUT beware that you are not deceived by self-love
  - Always dispose of a part of your means to give heartily to the poor
  - Impoverish yourself by what you give away, God will give it back to you
  - Love the poor and poverty, we become like to what we love, love makes lovers equal.
- If you like the poor, seek them out, take pleasure in bringing them to your home, in going to theirs, talk freely with them and be ready to meet them.
- Let your tongue be poor and your hands rich to give from your abundance
- Be even poorer than the poor, be a servant of the poor,
  - Teen to their sickbed, cook for them, sew for them, serve them more than you would serve royalty
  - King Louis and Saints Elizabeth of Hungry
- The riches people may easily be without something they want, that they have to suffer something they do not like. Accept these things cheerfully, rejoice in them,

bear them willingly. When you find yourself in a situation when you have to accept something less than your status or means, accept it cheerfully

- Some with a storm, flood, fire, drought, theft lawsuit (pandemic) it is a real time to practice poverty, accepting the loss quietly, and adapting yourself patiently.

### **How to Possess a Rich Spirit Amid Real Poverty**

- If you are poor, use that situation to turn your poverty into a true value
- You are in good company because Jesus was poor, Mary, Apostles, a numberless saints
- It was not your choice, but God's will made you poor
- Two kinds of poverty
  - There is a poverty that is praised and cared for, religious poverty
  - neglected poverty, secular poverty, involuntary poor, which is poorer than religious poverty
- Do not complain about being poor because then it is unwelcomed, and you are no longer poor in spirit
- Those who are over ambitious at being poor without suffering any inconvenience
- Do not be ashamed to being poor, accept help with humility, recall Mary's poverty, contempt and suffering, follow her example and be rich amid your poverty

### **Friendship: Evil and Frivolous Friendship**

- Friendship is the most dangerous of all affections.
- All love is not friendship, one may love without return, friendship implies mutual love
- Various friendships based on the level of sharing, communicating
  - Share false and vain things the friendship is false and vain
  - Share good and true things the friendship is good and true
  - Friendship built on the highest and purest intercommunion, is the best, like honey culled from the choicest flowers
  - Sensual relationship is not worthy of friendship
    - Marriage based only in this is not marriage – involves participation of life, industry, possessions, affections, fidelity. Marriage is a real and holy friendship
- Relationship founded on mere sensuality, vanity, frivolity is not friendship. If one is said to be delightful because he is good-looking, well-dressed, sings, dances talks well, not friendships

### **Frivolous Attachments**

- Foolish attachments between men and women without marriage is not friendship. Even if no intention of ending in sin by them, some indulge in passing inclination and other excited by vanity taking pleasure in them. These are evil friendships, they draw hearts from God and from their spouses who are the lawful owner of your affections.
- Nothing comes from these except loss of time, credit, unreasoning excitement, mistrust, jealousy and anxiety and mental uneasiness, being perturbed.

- These things belong to your spouse.
  - Your natural beauty belongs to your spouse, but if it is exhibited to all, like a net spread before birds, what will be the end? You will be taken by whoever admires you, looks and glances will be exchanged, smiles and tender words, at first hesitatingly exchanged, but soon more boldly given and received. Far be it from me to describe the end, but this much I will say, nothing said or done by young men and women under such circumstances but is perilous.”
- Some say that they are just having fun, but will not go far, It will overpower your heart, and reduce your good resolutions to ashes, -- Who will pity a charmer that is bitten with a serpent.
- Do you, in your folly, imagine that you can lightly handle love as you please? You think to trifle with it, but it will sting you cruelly, and then every one will mock you, and laugh at your foolish pretension to harbor a venomous serpent in your bosom, which has poisoned and lost alike your honor and your soul.
- Husbandmen know that the walnut tree is very harmful in a vineyard or field, because it absorbs the fatness of the land and draws it away from the other crops; its thick foliage overshadows and deprives them of sunshine; and, moreover, it attracts passers-by, who tread down and spoil all that is around while striving to gather its fruit. So with these foolish love affairs and the soul; they engross it, so that it is unable to bring forth good works; their superfluous foliage--flirtations, dallings and idle talk--consume profitable time; and, moreover, they lead to so many temptations, distractions, suspicions, and the like, that the heart becomes altogether crushed and spoiled. Such follies not only banish Heavenly Love, they likewise drive out the fear of God, enervate the mind, and damage reputation. They may be the plaything of courts, but assuredly they are as a plague spot of the heart.

### **Real Friendship**

- Friendship based on mutual liking be charity, devotion and Christian perfection, God knows how precious a friendship it is.
- Love on earth like we hope to love in heaven
- Not charity, which is a love due to everyone, but spiritual friendship which binds souls together, and who share devotions and spiritual interests
- Jesus had special friendships, St. Paul, St. Gregory, St. Ambrose – Saints had special friendships that did not hinder their perfection
- Quoting Thomas, we cannot bestow perfect friendship on many persons, so friendship is a virtue

### **The Difference Between True and False Friendship**

- Heracleum (Hogweed and cow parsnip) Giant hogweed is toxic and give phototoxic burns (when a medication is activated when exposed to UV light and causes damage to the skin. It looks like a sunburn or a rash)
- There is danger in confusing honey from Heraclyum (Heracleum) from other things because it resembles something that looks wholesome

- We must be on guard not to be deceived in making friendships. Especially of the opposite sex. Satan deludes those who love one another.
- They begin with virtuous affection but if no discretion, frivolity will creep in, then sensuality, until something becomes carnal. Be on the watch
- False friendship upsets the mind, makes its victim to totter in the ways of purity and devotion, inducing affected, mincing looks, sensual caresses, inordinate sighings, petty complaints of not being loved, slight but questionable familiarities, gallantries (braveries), embraces, and the like, which are sure precursors of evil
- True friendship is modest and straightforward in every glance, loving and pure in caresses, has no sighs save for Heaven, no complaints save that God is not loved sufficiently. That honey confuses the sight, and worldly
- Worldly friendship confuses judgment so that people think they are right while doing evil, their excuses and pretexts to be valid reason, they fear the light and love the darkness
- True friendship is clear-sighted, hides nothing,
- False friendships lead to bitter after taste. Turns to evil, slander, deceit, sorrow confusion, and jealousies
- Pure friendship leads is modest courteous, and loving
- Anything that you would not want your parents, spouses or confessors know, it is sure sign that they are damaging their conscience

### **Remedies Against Evil Friendships**

- Reject evil and turn to Christ, do not enter into any treaty with the devil. Do not listen to him with the intentions of rejecting him, FOR GOD'S SAKE, BE FIRM
- The ear and the heart are closely allied. Difficult to keep smooth words which enter in at the ear from finding their way down into the heart
- Guard our ears against evil words which quickly infect the heart
- Never hearken to any indiscreet conversation whatsoever, never mind if you seem rude and uncourteous in rejecting all such.
- You have dedicated your heart to God
- If you are already entangled in unreal affection it is hard to be set free. Go to God and with all you can muster, resist any budding evil.
- Stay away from any unholy affection who have if you cannot leave then abstain from all private interactions and communication that can feed the unholy flame
- Very strong – I say unhesitatingly to whosoever has become entangled in any such worthless love affair. Cut it short, break it off, do not play with it, or pretend to untie the knot; cut it through, tear it asunder. There must be no dallying with an attachment which is incompatible with the Love of God.
- If you have any lingering affections, more work needs to be done because the good is exceeding horror for the unworthy affection. Imperfections of your repentance. Go to God, prayer, reading books, confession and communion, spiritual director, take counsel with a faithful wise friend. Do not doubt that God can set you free. The goal it is to see the horror of your affection
- HE KNOWS HUMANITY – HE THEN SAYS WHAT WE WOULD SAY". Perhaps you will say that it is unkind, ungrateful thus pitilessly to break off a friendship.

- You are being kind because you are breaking the other's chain as your own. He may not appreciate his gain at the time later he may thank you

### **Further Advice Concerning Intimacies**

- Since no one is perfect, in friendships we exchange what is good, not what is evil. Love the other not the other's faults. Careful not to adopt our friend's faults.
- Husbands, wives, children, friends, can easily pick up the faults of the one's they love.
- Everyone has enough imperfections of their own without adding those of others, friendships help one another in getting rid of imperfections, not copy them. As far as sins, never take on the sins of friends.
- True and living friendship cannot thrive amid sin. Sin destroys friendship

### **The Practice of Bodily Modification**

- In reforming, one begins from within. Not external actions, for whosoever has Jesus Christ in his heart will soon show it in all his external actions.
- Write the precious and holy name JESUS in your heart and external actions will bear the stamp of Jesus name, he will live in your every actions and will be traced in every member and part of you.
- Whoever so gains the heart has won the whole man
- Fast – if you can beyond what the church tells you. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, as days of abstinence - but follow according to your own devotion and your director's discretion
- Disapproves of long and immoderate fasting – if we get weak, we turn readily to self-indulgence.
- The stag does not run with speed either when over fat or too thin, and so we are in peril of temptation when the body is overfed or underfed.
- Excessive want of mor
- Be sensible and deal with it according to what is required by each man's state in life.
- Bear the exhaustion of work if that is your state than fasting. If you need bodily strength to do the work you are called to do, it is better to do the work than to not be able to do it because of mortifications
- It is more virtuous in eating what is offered to you as it comes, whether you like it or not, than in always choosing the worst. To choose the worst may seem ascetic, eating what is set before you involves greater submission of the will, you give up your taste and your choice
  - IT MAKES NO SHOW, INCONVENIENCES NO ONE, AND ADAPTS TO SOCIAL LIFE
  - Eat such things as are set before you lies in indifference to what one eats and drinks.
  - Exception for any food that is unwholesome, injurious to the person.
- Habitual moderation is better than excessive abstinence, and then great indulgence
- Hair shirts for the religious, not the ordinary people. Certain days of penance may be used subject to the counsel of a judicious confessor.

- Go to bed early in order to be ready to rise early and sing God's praises like the birds. Easy to connect with God in the morning and it promotes health and holiness
- Important to deal with the heart than to blame the body in mortification. In order to purge our vices, no doubt it is well to mortify the flesh, but above all it is necessary to purify the affections and renew the heart
- Seek the advice of your spiritual guide in taking on any mortifications.

### **Society and Solitude**

- You should neither be excessive in being alone or in the company of others.
- Bad society is when interaction with others have an evil object, when those with whom we mix are vicious, indiscreet, licentious. Always avoid them like a bee from a dunghill. It is perilous to associate with them
- There is social interaction that refreshes us after hard work, that is OK. There is no harm in enjoying others during leisure hours.
- Always good to meet with devout people
- Our devout life will be helped by interaction with other devout souls
- Simplicity, gentleness, and modesty are to be desired in all society. Quiet cheerfulness
- You must avoid all that is impertinent and uncivil which is sure to be wrong.
  - Depreciation this person, slandering another, wounding a third stimulating the follow of another – all such things, however amusing are foolish
- Learn to like solitude, where you can recollect your mind, refresh your soul with good and holy thoughts and some spiritual reading.
  - Even Jesus said to his disciples, come apart to a deserted place and rest awhile.