

Reading the Catholic Classics Together
Introduction to the Devout Life

Dates	Chapters	Pages
September 13, 2021	Introduction to the Author, Text and Spirituality (Preface as review)	

PART 1

EXERCISES AND SACRAMENTS

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

September 20, 2021 **Preface, Part 1, Chapters 1-22** **Pages 1-36**

PART 2

SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER

Counsels as to Uplifting the Soul to God in Prayer and the Use of the Sacraments

September 27, 2021 **Part 2, Chapter 1-21** **Pages 37-68**

PART 3

PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

Counsels Concerning the Practice of Virtue

October 4, 2021 **Part 3 Chapters 1-10** **Pages 69-96**

October 11, 2021 **Part 3, Chapters 1-24** **Pages 96-123**

October 18, 2021 **Part 3, Chapters 25-41** **Pages 123-157**

PART 4

AVOIDING THE ENEMY

Counsels Concerning Some Ordinary Temptations

October 25, 2021 **Part 4, Chapters 1-15** **Pages 158-187**

PART 5

WITHDRAW AND REFRESH

Counsels and Practice for Renewing and Confirming the Soul in Devotion

November 1, 2021 **Part 5, Chapters 1-18** **Pages 188-206**

October 4, 2021

How to Select That Which We Should Chiefly Practice

- When love enters your heart, it brings all other virtues but they do not all work right away or all the time.
- Some people make a great mistake when trying to cultivate a special virtue for it on all occasions
- There are some virtues that are called upon on special occasions and others that should be a part of all we do
- Choose a virtue that is according to your duty and not those that are best according to your taste
- Every calling stands in special need of some special virtue. Depending on your state in life will call for certain virtues. Choose the ones important to the life you were called to
- Choose the most excellent NOT the most showy
- Common men value temporal almsgiving more than spiritual almsgiving, fasting, exterior discipline and mortification over, meekness, cheerfulness, modesty and other interior mortifications.
- Choose the best not the most highly esteemed, the most excellent, not the most visible, the truest not the most conspicuous.
- When beset by a vice, it is well to focus on the opposite virtue. If pride or anger, then strive to cultivate humility and gentleness
- Turn all religious exercises to the same object (prayer, sacraments, prudence constancy, moderation)

The Same Subject Continued

- Those who are just beginning in the life of virtue should be treated differently than those who have been long on the journey. One needs to be patient with himself. Zeal for the virtues need checking to see if it is not too excessive at the beginning
- The defects and faults of one person can be seen as virtues for a less perfect soul. There are actions that are imperfections in the perfect but are highly esteemed in the imperfect.
- Think well of those who practice virtue, although imperfectly
- Many think these are virtues but they are not: ecstasies, trances, rhapsodies, extraordinary transformation, which claim to raise the soul with special messages. These can happen but God gives them and we should not aspire to them. They are not necessary in order to love and serve God, the only thing we should desire.
- Our only business is to become good, devout people, pious men and women and all our efforts must be that end.
- Patience, cheerfulness, self-mortification, humility, obedience, poverty, chastity, kindness to our neighbor, forbearance toward our failings, diligence and holy fervor
- It is true that God does not reward us according to the dignity of our office but according to the humility and love which they have exercised it

- Sometimes it turns out that people who aspire to be angels are not ordinarily good men, and that their goodness lies more in high-flown words than in heart and deed

Patience

- The more perfect our patience, the more fully we possess our souls
- Do not limit your patience to any kind of trial but extend it to all things God sends your way
- Some are patient only when there is glory to be patient. A really patient person is ready to bear inglorious troubles as well as those that are honorable.
- A brave man can bear evil and hatred from the world but a great patient person bears it from good men, friends, family, that is the real test of patience
- The sting of a bee hurts more than that of a fly so the injuries and contradictions we endure from good people are much harder to bear than any others
- Be patient with the other things that arise out of the big trials. Some endure trial but then are impatient with the consequences of the trial.
 - I would not mind poverty if it were not that I could not bring up my children as I desire.
 - One would patiently bear to be the subject of slander only if nobody believed it
 - Accept one side of trouble but fret against the rest, they believe they are patient under sickness but fret at their inconvenience they are to their friends
- Be sure that we must patiently accept not sickness only, but the sickness God chooses to send, in this place, with these people and in the circumstances he ordains
- Wait whatever results God wills with perfect resignation. If he remedies evil thank him, if evil grows greater than the remedies, grow in patience.
- If you are accused falsely, defend yourself and deny it, this is due to your respect for the truth, but if you are still accused, do not let it trouble you. You have had die respect for truth and now have the same for humility
- Complain as little as possible, in a general rule, complaining is a sin. Self love always magnifies your injuries
- Do not complain to those who are easily angered and excited. If you need to complain, to seek remedy or sooth your mind, do it to some calm, gentle spirit filled with the love of God
 - If not, it will not relieve your heart but provoke you to greater disturbance
 - Instead of taking the thorn that pricks you, it drives the thorn further in your foot.
- Some refrain from complaining because they think that it shows weakness but still maneuver to make others pity them, so they are known by others as one who is suffering with patience and courage. This is FAKE patience, it is refined ambition or vanity.
- A really patient person neither complains nor seeks to be pitied, he speaks simply and truly of his trouble, without exaggerating it weight or bemoaning himself
- When you are sick, offer it all to the lord, unite it to the sufferings of Christ that he bore for you. Obey your physician and take all medicines, remedies, and nourishments. Desire your recovery. Be ready to die if he will it.

- Think of Jesus on the cross often knowing that none of your sufferings can compare to his, in kind and degree
- Think of the martyrs and what they endured

Greater Humility

- We must be empty vessels, not filled with self-esteem
- Humility drives stan away
- All saints, especially Mary esteemed the grace of humility above all other virtues
- Some are proud because the ride a fine horse, wear a feather in their hat and are expensively dressed, If anyone has reason to be proud it is the horse, the bird and the tailor.
- Petty vanity to pride oneself in a moustache, beard, curled hair, white hands dancing singing. These are trivial and frivolous matters.
- People look for the world to give them respect for intelligence, or over personal beauty thinking everyone admires it. It is all glory that men take to themselves
- IF you want to know if a man is really wise, learned generous and noble, see if his life is molded by humility, modesty and submission.
- If they are only surface and showy, proportion to their demonstrativeness is their unreality
- For those who love rank, title, and precedence, it is worthless when sought for or exacted – honor is valuable when freely paid
- Peacock opens his showy tail and exhibits the ugliness of his body.
- Honor is pleasant to those who merely taste it as they pass, without seeking or craving it, but will become dangerous and hurtful to ones who delight in it and feed on it
- A man who aims at real goodness will not care for outward tokens of honor
- A good person seeking to grow in grace can take their natural rank and position, so long as they are not engrossed by such things and do not involve themselves in anxiety, contention or ill-will.

Interior Humility

- For Francis de Sales, all that is above is really worldly wisdom than humility.
- Some who will not think about the graces with God gave them fearing that they may be too vainglory, but they are quite wrong.
- The road to humility is to consider the many gifts given to us by God and the many things we have done against his will.
- There is no fear of puffing oneself up when looking at the good within us if we are confident that it is done not by our efforts but by God.
- Great appreciation of the grace given to you should make you humble, appreciation begets gratitude
- What we do with God is no merit of our own, we rejoice in the good God does in us. Give all the glory to God alone
- In humility, we pretend a lot, pretend to take the lowest place, with the full intention of being brought up higher

- True humility does not try to be humble in that it does not make a display of our lowliness. Humility tries to hide itself.
- Do not pretend to wish to be last unless you really mean it. Humble first your heart
- A truly humble person would want others to call him worthless and good for nothing than to say so of himself
- False humility
 - Some say they leave mental prayer to those who are more perfect
 - They are not worthy to go to communion
 - Decline to use their talents in the service to God lest they become too proud
 - Vicious humility that secretly condemns God's gift and mocks God call of lowliness that which is really self-love
 - If God grants us a favor, it is pride to reject it and true humility lies in obedience
- Proud man who trusts in himself undertakes nothing, but the humble man is braver in that in his helplessness he courage is to trust in God
- It is foolish to pretend we know something, when we really do not
- Any humility that goes against charity is false
- Life of honesty and simplicity is humility

Humility Makes us Rejoice in Our Own Abjection

- Abjection means completely without pride or dignity, self-abasing
 - Abjection is the poverty vileness and littleness which exist in us, humility implies a real knowledge and voluntary recognition of that abjection
 - Not just acknowledging our abjection but taking pleasure in them. Only to give more glory to God
- Everyone accepts the trials that make us honorable but many people reject the trials that make one lowly
 - Everyone respects the hermit shivering in his worn-out garb, but rejects the poor person who is the same, often despised of it
 - Religious or a child who is obedient is praised, but a knight or lady, it is cowardice
 - Abject suffering. Cancer in the arm vs cancer in the face. One has only the pain to bear, the other has to endure the disgust and repulsion of others because of the cancer.
- We should not just rejoice in our troubles but cherish the abjection done in humility
- The world despises patience, gentleness, simplicity, and humility while esteems prudence, valor, liberality
- Some acts of charity are praised and others despised Almsgiving is praised and forgiveness of injury is despised
- Someone who refuses to join in excess of dress, amusement, gossip is laughed at and criticized, Their self-restraint is called bigotry. To rejoice in that is to rejoice in abjection
- In visiting the sick, to be sent the most wretched case and I like it but if I am sent to a better class person, it is interior abjection, for there is less grace and merit so in that work and so accept

- While rejoicing in the lowliness which is abjection, we must use all means to remedy the evil from which it springs, especially if the evil is serious.
- We take what the abjections that are good for our soul and acceptable to God. Accept what comes your way and if you can choose, choose the one that is most contrary to your individual inclination and your vocation.
 - Choose to be a doorkeeper in God's house than a dwell in the tents of the ungodliness
- What he has said is hard but will becomes sweet as honey when put into practice

How to Combine Due Care for a Good Reputation with Humility

- Charity requires and humility allows us to desire and to maintain a good reputation
- Do not be exaggerated about it because you can ruin it as much as a person who is so concerned about their health can actually make them sick
- Indifference to insult and slander is the response
- Towns with wooden bridge fear when floods come, those with stone bridges do not unless a very unusual bridge appears. – Soul built on solid foundation can afford slanderous tongues. The weak are ever disturbed and uneasy
- The one who seeks to be well thought of by everybody will be esteemed by nobody
- Reputation is a signboard of where virtue dwells
- If others say you are a hypocrite because you are devout or that you are a coward because you forgive an insult, despise all such accusations
- Take jealous care of your reputation but do not idolize it.
- Hair shaven can grow back, hair torn out is destroyed. Reputation be shaven by slanderous tongues no problem, if lost through our own vices or meanness of evil living, it will not be easily restored, the roots are plucked out.

Gentleness Towards Other and Remedies Against Anger

- Keep gentleness and humility in your heart
- Some are fake in that in their excessive gentleness and humility, they are stirred up with pride and anger by the smallest wrong and contradiction
- If we are stung by slander or ill-nature, we wax proud and swell with anger, it is proof that our gentleness and humility are unreal and mere artificial show.
- Correction given in anger, however tempered by reason, never has so much effect as that given altogether without anger
- Do not let anger in because once in, it is hard to get rid of. It feeds upon endless false fancies. All angry men think his is just
- Better to live without anger than to think you can control it
- Give in a little and it will master you.
- Sometimes those who insist on quieting people make more noise then the ones they are trying to quiet = if you are in a hurry to restrain your temper, you will throw your heart into a worse confusion and lose all self-control
- When stirred up with anger call upon God for help, like the storm he can calm it.
- Warning – Your prayers against anger should be calm and gentle with without vehemence.
- If angry, quickly atone for the fault by speedy act of meekness toward the person

- Work on meekness and kindness as a habit and not just actions but in the heart

Gentleness Towards Ourselves

- Be gentle to yourself, never be irritated with yourself or your imperfections
- Anger fosters pride and comes from self-love
- We want quiet, steady, firm displeasure with our faults
- Sometimes we are angry about small faults and forget the bigger ones or laugh that we have those
- We judge ourselves in the influence of passion rather than the light of reason.
- Tender affectionate correction has far more weight with a child than anger and sternness. So too in our own hearts. (see quote)
- When you are fallen, lift up your heart in quietness, humbling yourself deeply before God, lament that you have offended God and begin anew

We Must Attend to the Business of Life Carefully, but without Eagerness or Over-Anxiety

- Be careful and diligent in all your affairs. Give them your best attention, but do not be anxious, every form of excitement affects judgment and reason
- Martha was worried about many things
- Work done in excitement and quickly is not done well
- The bumble bee makes far more noise than the honey bee and the bumble bee makes nothing but wax
- Accept the duties that come to you and do them quietly and methodically one after another. Being overwhelmed means you accomplish nothing
- Trust in God, work with him and then what you accomplish was his will, whether you think it should be different does not matter
- Like a child gathering strawberries or other berries, one hand with his father and the other hand gathering. Father and use the world's god with one hand and hold fast to God's hand
- Beware of letting go of his hand thinking that you can do more. Look to God from time to time.