

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		
<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>		
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PART 2		
SACRAMENTS AND PRAYER		
<i>Counsels as to Uplifting the Soul to God in Prayer and the Use of the Sacraments</i>		
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PART 3		
PRACTICE OF VIRTUE		
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October 18, 2021	Part 3, Chapters 25-41	Pages 123-157
PART 4		
AVOIDING THE ENEMY		
<i>Counsels Concerning Some Ordinary Temptations</i>		
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WITHDRAW AND REFRESH		
<i>Counsels and Practice for Renewing and Confirming the Soul in Devotion</i>		
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September 20, 2021

Preface

- He is not writing anything new but rearranging what was already written by many others before. Flower arrangement of the same flowers
- Teaching for those who live in the world, not for religious who have left the world like in the past. For those in temporal affairs
- It is for people who want to live in the world without be consumed by it.
- He was asked to write this text
- Wrote fast because he is busy so it is not polished as he hoped
- Written to Philothea, which means Lover of God, general person
- He will get criticism writing this as a bishop. People say he is too busy to write when the work of bishops is too important to waste time with this
- He believes there is no more important work of the bishop than to lead souls to perfection.
- Important labor to gude the souls, even if it is difficult, willing to do hard work for something loved.
- He has a long way to being devout, he is hoping that as God sees him leading others that God will give him the gift too. The best way to learn is to teach.

PART 1 – COUNSELS AND EXERCISES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE SOUL FROM ITS FIRST DESIRE AFTER A DEVOUT LIFE UNTO A FULL RESOLUTION OF PURSUING THE SAME

True Devotion Explained (pages 1-3)

- There is fake devotion and you need to know what is real devotion
- You can waste time, make mistakes if you do not know real devotion, chase after empty profitless shadows
- We color devotions by our own likeness and disposition
- Uses 3 acts of prayer fasting and almsgiving
 - Fast perfectly but have hate and slander in the heart
 - Pray a lot but does not refrain from anger and insulting others
 - Almsgiving, open your purse but keep heart closed to forgiveness
- Doing visible acts that look like devotion but it is all fake
- Devotion presupposes love of God
 - Charity, we will act
 - Devotion is the fullest perfection in that it acts in charity but carefully, deliberately, promptly, that is devotion
- Ostrich, hen, eagle/dove
 - Ostrich never flies – Sinners, movements are earthbound
 - Hen flies with difficulty – Well meaning people do charities by rarely, slowly, and heavily
 - Dove/Eagle soars high and always flying – rise up to God, frequently, swiftly and soaring
- Good men are filled with love and do works of charity

- Devout men are ready, apt to do acts of charity with excitement,
- Recovering from illness one walks only so far and slowly like the converted sinner, Devotion, he runs and leaps
- Love and Devotion is like a fire and a flame
- Devotion adds to love, eagerness, energetic, diligent, where one is not just obeying God commands

The Nature and Excellence of Devotion (Pages 3-5)

- The world will try to discourage you in true devotion
- The world sees religion as making people gloomy, and unpleasant.
- But the devout life is sweet, happy, loveable
- The world sees devout people do things that are hard but they do not see the inward devotion that makes these acts pleasant and easy
- For Martyrs, devotion sweetens torments and take the bitterness from them
- Devotion is sweetest of sweets, queen of virtues, perfection of love
- Analogy, if love is milk, devotion is cream, is love is the plant, devotion is the blossom

Devotion is Suitable to Every Vocation and Profession (Pages 5-6)

- Each brings fruit of devotion according to kind and vocation
- Different exercise of devotion is required by each vocation, modified by strength, calling, and duties of each
- Bishop cannot act like a Carthusian, family man like a religious, artisan in church all day.
- Mistakes are made when there is no discrimination between real devotion and the indiscretion of those fancy themselves devout
- True devotion hinders nothing, but perfects everything.
- Bee suck honey from flowers without damaging them, leaving them as whole and fresh as it found them
- When everyone fulfills his special calling better when subject to the influence of devotion - Family duties are lighter married love All is done better and lighter when devotion
- It is an error, a very heresy to seek to banish the devout life from secular areas, soldier's guardroom, mechanic's workshop, prince's court or the home.
- There are various kind of devotion well suited to lead those who calling is secular, long the paths of perfection. It is not only for religious and monastic life

The Need of a Guide for Those who Would Enter Upon and Advance in the Devout Life (Pages 6-8)

- Quoting St. Teresa of Avila, you can try as hard as you want on your own, but you will never reach the heights of those who have spiritual directors
- Obedience to your confessor is a great virtue

- You submit your will to God's ministers so that you can better submit yourself to God
- Look for someone how fears the Lord, a truly humble soul that earnestly desires to advance in the spiritual life
- Pray to God to supply you with a guide after the heart of God.
- Do not see your spiritual director as a human being but look to God who will speak to you through him.
- Deal with him in all sincerity, faithfulness, open heart, showing both good and evil, without deception or concealing anything.
- There are not many so go carefully and as God for help.

The First Step: Purifying the Soul (Pages 8-10)

- The soul that aims to become the spouse of Christ but forsake sin, shave away every impediment that can hinder the love of God
- The very first step toward spiritual health is to be purged from our sinful ways
- Ordinary purification is accomplished by slow degrees, step by step, gradually and painfully.
- The soul that rises out from sin to a devout life has been compared to the dawn, which does not banish darkness suddenly, but by degrees.
- Sin comes on fast but leaves slowly
- Too often the person becomes disheartened because he is still subjected to imperfections after having made some attempt at leading a devout life
- At the other end, same error to thing that when you start you are now freed from all imperfections.
- Being afflicted by imperfections will continue until you die
- Humility, courage to persevere,

The First Purification: From Mortal Sin (Pages 10-11)

- First things you need to do is go to confession
- Strive to hate your sin and to be sorry for your sins.
- Remember 4 things 1) that by sin you have lost god's grace, rejected your share in paradise, accepted the pains of hell and renounced God' eternal love.
- People go to confession with the intention of returning to their old sins by not avoiding the occasion of sin or taking the necessary measures for amendment of life
- Make a General confession to steady and fix the soul

The Second Purification: From All Sinful Affections (Pages 11-12)

- Penitents who forsake sin, yet without forsaking their sinful affections; they intend to sin no more but it does against them to abstain from the pleasures of sin.
- Sick man loves melons, cannot have any it will kill him but still longs for it, bargains when he can have it , smells it, things those who can eat it very luck.
- Weak cowardly penitents abstain awhile from sin but reluctantly, they wish they could sin without going to hell.
- A person may not actually commit sin but is bound to sin by his affections.

- It is not just staying away from sin but cleaning the heart from all affections pertaining to sin, big danger of relapse and weaken your mind and clog it

How to Effect This Second Purification (pages 12-13)

- One must know the great evils resulting from sin and so have a deep and sincere contrition.
- The contrition must be strong and sincere in order to not only hate the sin but anything connected to the sin
- Must kindle our contrition and repentance as much as we can
- Go through the meditations to learn to hate sin and affects for it
- Use them in the order they appear, take one a day, in the morning to ponder it throughout the day

Creation

First Meditation: On Creation (Page13-15)

The Second Meditation: On the End for Which We Were All Created (Pages 15-16)

The Third Meditation: On the Gifts of God (Pages 16-18)

Sin

The Fourth Meditation: On Sin (Pages 18-19)

The Fifth Meditation: On Death (Pages 20-21)

The Sixth Meditation: On Judgment (Pages 21-23)

The Seventh Meditation: On Hell (Pages 23-24)

Eternal Life

The Eighth Meditation: On Paradise (Pages 24-25)

The Ninth Meditation: On the Choice Open to You Between Heaven and Hell (Pages 26-27)

The Tenth Meditation: On How the Soul Chooses the Devout Life (Pages 27-29)

How to Make a General Confession (Pages 29-30)

- Sin is shameful when we commit it but with repentance and confession, sin because salutary and honorable.
- Contrition and confession are salutary and honorable., lovely and sweet-savored
- Humility – they infinitely displease us because they offend God
- Telling fully the physician all details of our pain.

A Sincere Protest Made with the Object of Confirming the Soul's Resolution to Serve God, as a Conclusion to its Acts of Penitence (Page 30-31)

- A prayer to God after confession to resolve to serve him.

Conclusion of the First Purification (Page 32)

- Listen to the words of absolution from the priest as coming from God
- Blessed Bargain – Confession and giving yourself to him, you get God and save yourself for eternal life
- Affections are easy to rekindled because of concupiscence, you can mortify them but you will them for all this life.

The Necessity of Purging Away All Tendency to Venial Sins (Page 32-34)

- Like in a mirror at the end of a day, you see more plainly the soils and stains, so too with the light of the Holy Spirit on the conscience, see the sins, inclinations and imperfections that HINDER our progress toward real devotion
- We have various inclinations and tendencies to venial sin.
- We can never be altogether free from venial sin but we can be without affection for venial sin.
- you must purify your soul from all inclination to venial sin.
- Venial sins do not permanently injure the soul but venial sin is fostered, cherished, then they destroy the sweet savor of the soul or destroy its devotion.
- End up with bad habits and evil inclinations.
- If venial sin lingers or if we take pleasure in them and indulge them, we spoil devotion
- How can a generous heart take delight in anything it knows to be displeasing to God or wish to do things that offends him?

It is Necessary to Put Away Inclinations for Useless and Dangerous Things (Pages 34-35)

- Social events and human pleasures are not evil but they are dangerous in that they can become addictive, anything that has become addictive hinders the devotion.
- The harm lies not in doing them but in the degree to which you care for them.
- Do not forbid the use of dangerous pleasures, do not take excessive **delight** in, it will ruin your devotion

All Evil Inclinations Must be Purged Away (Pages 35-36)

- There are imperfections in each one of us that are not venial or mortal sins
- Everyone has them, they are natural to each person, they can be remedied, corrected and even eradicated. - You do this by cultivating the opposite disposition. (Some are easy, some are opposed to everything, some accept people opinions, some are cross). These are things that we are naturally disposed to be by temperament.