

TEMPERANCE

Previous reading: *Compendium*, 383; (purity) 529-530. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1809. 1838.

What is temperance? Temperance moderates the attraction to pleasures, assures the mastery of the will over instincts and provides balance in the use of created goods.

I. The nature of temperance:

Definition. Temperance is the virtue which regulates the sensitive appetite like the pleasures of touch, viz. in the pleasures of food and sex.

It is customary to distinguish four forms of pleasure: 1) *purely spiritual* pleasure arising from intellectual activity and concerned with spiritual objects, such as the Beatific Vision, or the joy experienced in the possession of theological knowledge; 2) pleasure which is *spiritual only in the wide sense* of the term inasmuch as it arises from intellectual activity regarding material objects, such as the pleasure of the miser in his money; 3) *sense pleasures* of the body arising from the sense perception of some pleasing object, such the pleasure resulting from hearing a pleasant melody, or the pleasure given to the eye by beautiful colors; 4) *carnal or sensual pleasures* caused by an intimate physical union of an object with the special nerves of the organs of taste and procreation, viz. the pleasures derived from food and sex.

Temperance may be understood a) in its *widest sense* to mean *moderation* in any action or passion; b) in its *wide sense* to mean *moderation in spiritual and sense pleasures*; c) in its *strict sense* to mean *moderation in sensual or carnal pleasures*, viz. in food and sexual matters.

The *proximate subject* of the virtue of temperance understood in its strict sense is the *concupiscible appetite as subject to the reason and will of man*.

The *object* of this virtue is *moderation* in the pleasures of touch, viz. in food and sex. Other sense and intellectual pleasures are regulated incidentally by temperance, in so far as they affect the pleasures which derive from food and sex.

Natural temperance acquired by natural effort and guided by natural reason alone has no other purpose in view than man's health, and therefore it differs specifically from supernatural temperance which is under the direction of faith and has as its chief effect man's spiritual welfare. Indeed supernatural temperance sometimes advises fasting, virginity, etc. which are abhorrent to natural temperance.

II. The parts of temperance in general:

There are two *integral parts* of temperance: the sense of shame and a love of reserve (*honestas*). The *sense of shame* is a fear of anything disgraceful; it is not a virtue in the strict sense of the word but rather a praiseworthy feeling which makes men blush as soon as anything shameful touches them. These two – the feeling of shame and the love of what is fitting – are vigilant protectors of chastity and temperance: and therefore to be highly cherished from one's youngest days.

St. Thomas gives *four subjective parts* of the virtue of temperance: *abstinence*, which is temperance in food; *sobriety*, which is temperance in drink – especially in the use of alcohol; *chastity*, which is temperance in the chief pleasure of the sexual act; *modesty*, which is concerned with the attendant circumstances of the act, such as the pleasure arising from kissing or touching, etc.

The *potential parts of temperance* are: *continence*, *meeekness*, *clemency*, *modesty*, which moderate man's appetite in things less difficult than the pleasures of touch. Included under modesty are *humility* and other virtues.

The subjective parts of temperance and their contrary vices

A) *Abstinence and Fasting*. Abstinence is the moral virtue which inclines man to the moderate use of food as dictated by right reason (or by faith) for his own moral good.

The acts which proceed from this virtue are fasting and abstinence strictly so-called, viz. from definite kinds of food, such as meat. Fasting is either a) complete, i.e., total abstinence from all food and drink, (for the law of the Eucharistic fast, .. p. 476 ff.); or b) *natural*, i.e. a partial abstinence from food and drink such as is demanded for reasons of health or for some other natural purpose; or c) *ecclesiastical*, which is commanded by laws of the Church.

The Vice Contrary to the Virtue of Abstinence – *Gluttony*. *Gluttony* is the inordinate indulgence in food or drink. This lack of moderation may be due to eating or drinking too soon, too expensively, too much, voraciously, or too exquisitely.

Moral evil of gluttony. Since gluttony consists in an excessive use of something in itself perfectly lawful, it is of its nature a venial sin; but for incidental reasons it may become grievously sinful; because of ensuing scandal or other evil effects. The effects of gluttony are given by St. Thomas as five: unreasonable hilarity, loquacity, dullness of mind, buffoonery, uncleanness.

B) *Sobriety and its contrary vice: drunkenness*. *Sobriety* is the virtue regulating man's desire for drink and his use of alcoholic. It is a distinct virtue since it has its own object which is most necessary for an upright moral life, viz. the moderate use of alcoholic drink. The need for this virtue becomes even more evident from the consideration of its contrary vice, drunkenness.

Drunkenness is a deliberate excess in the use of alcoholic drink or drugs to the point of forcibly depriving oneself of the use of reason for the sake of gratifying an inordinate desire for such drink and riot for the sake of promoting health.

The moral evil of drunkenness. 1) Complete drunkenness is a grave sin which admits of slight matter. This is the most common opinion today. The reason given is that it is *seriously contrary to right reason*, a) for a man to deprive himself knowingly and willingly of the use of his reason for the sake of gratifying his desire for intoxicants for no sufficient reasons of health; b) for a man to expose himself to a grave danger of sin through his manner of acting; c) for a man to expose himself to many other dangers as the result of drunkenness, such as ill-health, domestic troubles, damage to his property.

2) Any state short of complete drunkenness is of itself venially sinful. If there is a sufficient cause, such as the desire to rid oneself of the feeling of depression, there is no sin provided that it does not give rise to scandal or to other evils.

A man is responsible for the sins committed in a state of complete intoxication to the extent that he could and ought to have foreseen them.

It is not permissible to use such remedies unless there exists sufficient reason conducive to bodily health. Unless such remedies are used with great care, they can cause grave harm to one's health and very often they lead to evil moral effects, as is evident in those addicted to the use of some drugs.

C) *Chastity and virginity*. *Chastity* is the virtue which moderates the desire for venereal pleasure in accordance with the dictates of right reason. Whereas the chastity of married persons moderates the desire, the chastity of widows and virgins excludes the desire entirely. *Modesty* is a special aspect of chastity, for it concerns itself with external behavior, such as suggestive looks, words, touches, etc.

Virginity is a firm resolution of abstaining from all sexual pleasure made by one who has never been a partner to the sexual act. In so far as virginity is a distinct moral virtue, bodily integrity is only accidental to it. Therefore, if a person loses this integrity through a surgical operation or by involuntary attack, the virtue of virginity remains intact, unless the act is accompanied by voluntary and lustful pollution.

The excellence of the state and virtue of virginity is extolled in Sacred Scripture (*1Cor. 7:25-27; Rev 14:4*), by the Fathers of the Church, and by reason itself. For virgins refrain from all venereal pleasure with the express intention of devoting themselves more freely and perfectly to the service of God which is not only lawful but exceedingly praiseworthy. The objections raised against virginity on the grounds that it is unnatural and injurious to bodily health are of no value.

Vice contrary to chastity: Impurity (lust). *Impurity* is an inordinate desire for sexual pleasure. There are three *internal sins of impurity*: taking pleasure in immodest imaginations, taking pleasure in previous sins of impurity, unchaste desires.

Fornication is voluntary sexual intercourse between an unmarried man and woman.

Rape: the unlawful ravishing of a virgin with her consent; for the ravishing of a virgin contrary to her will; for the complete sexual act with any woman contrary to her will.

Abduction is the forcible removal of a person for the purpose of committing a sin against chastity.

Incest is sexual intercourse between persons related to each other who are unable to enter into marriage.

Sacrilege is the violation of a sacred person or place or thing by an act contrary to chastity.

Adultery is sexual intercourse between two persons at least one of whom is married.

Unnatural impurity. These are regarded as unnatural acts since they are contrary to the natural purpose of the sexual act, viz. the procreation of children.

III. The potential parts of temperance.

Continence is a disposition of the will inclining it to resist evil desires concerned with touch. It affords valuable assistance to the virtue of temperance.

Meekness is the moral virtue which moderates anger in accord with right reason. Humility and fortitude are extremely useful for acquiring meekness.

Clemency is a moral virtue inclining superiors to moderate or even to remit due punishment in so far as this is reasonable. The contrary vice is cruelty which demands and inflicts excessive punishment.

Modesty is the virtue which moderates all the internal and external movements and appearance of a person within the bounds and limits proper to his state in life, intellectual ability, and wealth. There are four virtues included under modesty: humility, studiousness, modesty in external behavior, modesty in dress.

a) *Humility* is the virtue which curbs man's inordinate desire for personal excellence and inclines him to recognize his own worth in its true light. Consequently this virtue has two functions: to restrain the inordinate desire for personal excellence; to subject man to God by the recognition that all the good he possesses comes from his Creator. This second function of humility is its chief, although not always sufficiently recognized as such by ascetical writers. - Humility is a most necessary virtue since it removes the poison of pride which obstructs the effectiveness of divine grace. Its contraries are inordinate self-depreciation by excess and pride by defect.

b) *Studiousness* is the virtue which moderates the desire and pursuit of truth in accordance with the principles of right reason. Its contrary vices are curiosity which is an excessive desire for knowledge, and negligence which is the voluntary omission of knowledge essential to one's state and condition in life.

c) *Modesty* in external behavior is the virtue inclining man to observe reasonable decorum in externals, which include: *Modesty in bodily behavior* is most essential for the preservation of pleasant intercourse amongst men, and thus St. Augustine in his Rule for the servants of God gives the following advice: "In all your movements let nothing be evident which would offend the eyes of another." *Modesty in recreation* or the right use of recreation is called *eutrapelia*. *Modesty in dress and bodily adornments* inclines a person to avoid not merely everything that is offensive and insufficient but also everything unnecessary. By excess the virtue is violated especially by women through excessive or even indecent adornment. In this matter, careful consideration must be given to local custom and great prudence must be exercised.

Cf. Prümmer, *Handbook of moral theology*, nn. 485-527. (180).

IV. Selected texts: purity of heart

How does one reach purity of heart? In the battle against disordered desires the baptized person is able, by the grace of God, to achieve purity of heart through the virtue and gift of chastity, through purity of intention, purity of vision (both exterior and interior), discipline of the imagination and of feelings and by prayer (*Compendium*, 529; *CCCh* 2520).

What are the other requirements for purity? Purity requires *modesty* which, while protecting the intimate center of the person, expresses the sensitivity of chastity. It guides how one looks at others and behaves toward them in conformity with the dignity of persons and their communion. Purity frees one from wide-spread eroticism and avoids those things which foster morbid curiosity. Purity also requires a purification of the social climate by means of a constant struggle against moral permissiveness which is founded on an erroneous conception of human freedom. (*Compendium*, 530; *CCCh* 2521-2527. 2533).

V. Means to moderate our passions:

1) Prayer, ask the Lord his gift, as a beggar... 2) Mortification, start with little things... 3) Avoid the occasion to sin (environment, friendships, places, control the use of mass media...). 4) Meditate in the Life of Christ... 4) Frequent Confession, also spiritual direction... 5) Frequent participation at the sacrifice of Mass and Communion... 6) Particular examination of conscience... 7) Spiritual exercises... 8) Live in the presence of God... Jesus knows your heart, thoughts, feelings at every moment and place... 9) Give yourself to help others and trying to make them happy...