Viri Christi



"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,
and men of violence take it by force."
Matthew 11:12

Objective: Spiritual Theology has been referred to as the science of the saints. It can also be referred to as the science of Christian perfection. Spiritual theology attempts to guide the soul from the very beginning of the Christian life through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive way. Over the next six months, we will investigate this "science of the spiritual life" as we discover an authentic Catholic male spirituality.

- Unit 1 The Nature and End of Man
- Unit 2 Sin & Salvation
- Unit 3 Fundamentals of the Spiritual Life
- Unit 4 The Purgative Way
- Unit 5 The Illuminative Way
- Unit 6 The Unitive Way

Unit 4 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #18 – Introduction to the Illuminative Way
- Episode #19 – Prayer of the Proficient
- Episode #20 – The Moral Virtues
- Episode #21 – The Theological Virtues
- Episode #22 – The Counterattacks of the Enemy

Episode #18 – The Illuminative Way

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What is the illuminative way?

2. Last month, we discussed the first of the three ways of the interior life, namely, the purgative way. As we discovered, the purgative way is the first stage on the path of holiness. We talked about the nature and purpose of the purgative way, defined what is means to be a beginner, and finally discussed the first and most important task for beginners in the spiritual life.

3. This week, we are going to introduce the second of the three ways of the interior life, namely, the illuminative way. In the illuminative way, the soul must be adorned with Christian virtues. We will discuss the nature of the illuminative way, the two classes of souls at this stage, and the program to be followed.

II. Proficients in the Spiritual Life

1. St. Paul on the Illuminative Way

    a. 1 Corinthians 11:1 – Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

    b. Philippians 3:13-17 – Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us.

2. The Nature of the Illuminative Way

    a. The illuminative way "is thus named because the great aim of the soul is now the imitation, the Following of Christ, by the positive exercise of the Christian virtues" (Tanquerey, 454).

    b. The main differences between the purgative and the illuminative way is that beginners struggle against sin and its causes, while the souls in progress also practice penance and mortification. Still, they struggle to become more like our Lord.

3. The Two Classes of Souls

    a. Devout souls have goodwill, are ambitious to do good, and attempt to avoid deliberate faults. However, they lack constancy, so they advance slowly and need to cultivate the virtues of fortitude and humility.

    b. Fervent souls are more humble and generous. They distrust themselves, have confidence in God, and are more energetic and consistent in practicing virtue. However, their virtue has not been solidified by trial, and they have to detach themselves from whatever hinders their union with God.

IV. Application: The Program to be Followed

1. First, a man needs to make Christ the center of his thoughts. This knowledge will lead to greater love of God, wherein Jesus becomes the center of his affections. Eventually, the love of God leads him to imitate our Lord.

2. Second, he needs to practice affective prayer and practice the moral and theological virtues so that his actions may not be based on his emotions but on deep-rooted convictions.

    a. Affective prayer "is that form of prayer in which devout affections predominate . . . whereby we express to God our love and our desire of glorifying Him. In this kind of prayer the heart is engaged to a greater extent than the mind" (Tanquerey, 976).

    b. Moral virtues include the cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and their related sub-virtues and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

Episode #19 – Prayer of the Proficient

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What is the prayer life of the proficient?

2. Last week, we discussed the nature of the illuminative way, the two classes of souls at this stage, and the program to be followed.

3. This week, we are going to discuss the prayer of the proficient in the spiritual life.

    a. The Nature of Affective Prayer

    b. Advantages of Affective Prayer

    c. Disadvantages of Affective Prayer

    d. Application: Means of Fostering Affections in Prayer

II. Prayer of the Proficient

1. The Nature of Affective Prayer (Tanquerey, 461-462)

    a. Affective prayer is that form of prayer in which the will takes precedence over the intellect. "Affective prayer devout affections predominate whereby we express to God our love and our desire of glorifying Him."

    b. Beginners need to acquire convictions, so they give more attention to reasoning rather than affections. In time, his affections will grow, and his prayer life will start to transition.

2. Advantages of Affective Prayer (Tanquerey, 464-465)

    a. The principal advantage is a closer and more abiding union with God.

    b. Affective prayer perfects all the virtues that flow from charity, including: conformity to God's will, desire to procure the glory of God, desire of frequent Communion, and the spirit of sacrifice.

    c. Affective prayer also increases spiritual consolations or pure joy.

    d. Affective prayer becomes more and more simple as we lessen the number and the variety of affections and intensify a certain few of them. It thus leads us on gradually to the prayer of simplicity, which we will cover in the next unit.

3. Disadvantages of Affective Prayer (Tanquerey, 465-467)

    a. Mental strain leading to fatigue and exhaustion when a person attempts to increase their affections. The remedy consists in remembering that a true love of God is centered in the will rather than in the feelings.

b. Some people will suffer from increased pride and presumption.

c. Some people make their entire devotion consist in a quest for spiritual consolations, while they neglect their duties of life and the practice of the ordinary virtues.

III. Application

1. Keep practicing the Rule of Life

2. Means of Fostering Affections in Prayer (Tanquerey, 463)

    a. Exercise the virtue of charity, which will move us to admire the infinite beauty, goodness, and loving mercy of God.

    b. Meditate frequently on the great truths that recall to us what God has done for us.

Episode #20 – The Moral Virtues

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What is the role of the moral virtues in the spiritual life?

2. Last week, we discussed the prayer of the proficient.

3. This week, we are going to discuss the moral virtues.

    a. Dispositions, Virtues, & Vices

    b. Acquired v. Infused Virtues

    c. Cardinal Virtues

II. The Moral Virtues

1. Virtues & Vices

    a. Dispositions are abilities, tendencies, or capacities that enable us to perform certain tasks or behave in specific ways. There can be both good and bad dispositions. Habit does not give us the power to do something; this we have from our nature. But habit enables us to do something *more easily and readily*.

    b. Vices are bad dispositions that lead one to act in ways that do not perfect a person or help them acquire a state of well-being that a human being is capable of.

    c. Virtues, on the other hand, are abilities, tendencies, or capacities that enable one to act in ways that contribute to their flourishing or functioning to their advantage, thereby satisfying their needs. A virtue is an acquired habit or ability that enables a person to act well.

2. Natural (Acquired) v. Infused Virtues

    a. Natural (Acquired) Virtues – Virtues acquired through frequent repetition of acts that render it easy to perform good moral actions.

    b. Infused Virtues – Adolphe Tanquerey defines infused virtues as "principles of action which God ingrafts in us, that they may perform in the soul the function of supernatural faculties and may thus enable us to perform meritorious acts" (*The Spiritual Life,* 1000).

3. The Cardinal Virtues – "The cardinal virtues may rightly be called the path to the good life, or happiness, in this world. These four virtues, and all of the sub-virtues under each of the four, cover all aspects of a good life as it concerns activities in this world. In fact, the very term "cardinal" comes from the Latin "hinge" since a good life is said to hinge upon these virtues."[1]

    a. Prudence – "Prudence is the virtue that disposes us to see rightly, the way things are in the world around us, and to employ that truthful vision to act rightly . . . Prudence is not only good deliberation about a situation and settling on the best course of action; it is also acting well based on that deliberation."[2] Prudence perfects the intellect.

    b. Justice – "Justice is the virtue that inclines us to good relationships with others that, in other words, "avoid collisions." It is such a fundamentally important virtue that for many thinkers, the term justice is simply equated with morality in general. . . the social nature of the human person means that individual human happiness is inextricable from the common good of varying levels of human community."[3] Justice perfects the will.

    c. Fortitude – "Fortitude is synonymous with bravery or courage. Fortitude is most basically defined as the virtue that enables one to face obstacles or difficulties well . . . fortitude may also be defined as the ability to suffer hardships well, whether the hardship is bodily or otherwise."[4] Fortitude perfects the irascible appetite.

    d. Temperance – "Temperance is the virtue that inclines us to desire and enjoy pleasures well. In enables us to regulate our actions, and even our desires, concerning pleasurable activities so that they are reasonable, or in accord with the way things really are."[5] Temperance perfects the concupiscible appetite.

III. Application

1. The infused virtues are likened to oars that one uses to row a boat. When a person is not in a state of grace, he is pushed along by the current of the world, but when one is in a state of grace, God gives him oars to row his boat against the tide. However, oars are only helpful if one uses them, so we must practice the virtues so we can develop good habits for holiness.

2. Keep practicing the Rule of Life

[1]William C. Mattison III. *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008), 68.

[2]Ibid., 98.

[3]Ibid., 135.

[4]Ibid., 181.

[5]Ibid., 76.

Episode #21 – The Theological Virtues

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What is the difference between the infused moral virtues and the theological virtues?

2. Last week, we discussed the difference between virtues and vices, the distinction between the infused and acquired virtues, and the four cardinal virtues.

3. This week, we are going to discuss the nature and role of the theological virtues.

4. What is the difference between infused moral virtues and the theological virtues? – Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains, "By the infused theological virtues we are raised and directed toward the supernatural last end. Hence, we should be raised and directed by the infused moral virtues regarding supernatural means capable of leading us to our supernatural end."[6]

II. The Theological Virtues

1. The Nature of the Theological Virtues

    a. 1 Corinthians 13:13

    b. Theological Virtues – "A good habit of the mind or will, supernaturally infused into the soul, whose immediate object is God. The theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity."[7]

    c. "The three theological virtues draw us away from the natural order to the divine and the supernatural. Faith looks beyond the horizons of human knowledge and clings to the truths and mysteries revealed by God in Jesus Christ; hope causes us to regard the things of this world of little worth when compared to the life of glory to which we are called; charity impels us to love God above all else and to love all else in God, rejecting anything that is an obstacle to that love."[8]

2. The Role of the Theological Virtues

    a. The role of the theological virtues "is to unite us to God through Jesus Christ, in order to make us sharers in the Divine life. They are, then, at once unifying and transforming virtues." (Tanquerey, 550)

    b. Peter Kreeft: Faith, hope, and love "are called the three theological virtues because they have God as their object. They are the glue that attaches us to God. They are the three-doored entrance to heaven. It is not that God refuses entrance at heaven's gate to anyone, these are heaven's gate. Anyone who has no faith in God, no hope in God, and no love of God cannot go

[6]Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*. Vol. 1. (Rockford, IL: Tan Books & Publishers Inc.: 1947), 60.

[7]Fr. John Hardon. *Catholic Dictionary*. (New York: An Image Book, 2013).

[8]Jordan Aumann. *Spiritual Theology*. (New York: Bloomesbury Continuum, 1980), 248.

to heaven because heaven would be hell to him. He could not endure or enjoy the presence of God after death any more than he did before death."

3. The Three Theological Virtues

    a. Faith – "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Heb. 11:1) Faith is based on authority. God says something that one cannot arrive at through reason, which is true, and one believes it based on his authority (who He is). God gives us faith as a gift to help us navigate this life.

    b. Hope – Hope is not a wish or a feeling; rather, it is a rock-solid guarantee. Christian hope does not come from us but from God. God is the object of hope, and God's promises are as sure as self-evident truths.

    c. Love – Why is love the greatest of the three? Love is greatest for faith, and hope will eventually pass away, but love persists forever. When we see God face to face in heaven, we will know the truth perfectly (1 Cor. 12), so faith will no longer be necessary. When we possess that which we hope for, the virtue of hope is extraneous, so it also will pass away. However, love does not pass away when it possesses its object completely; instead, it grows with intensity and exultation.

III. Application

1. For current or future fathers, whether domestic or ecclesial, what are you doing to exercise St. Paul's admonition to the head of the Christian household, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27)?

2. Keep practicing the Rule of Life

Episode #22 – The Counterattacks of the Enemy

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What kind of training protocol is necessary to repel the counterattacks of the enemy?

2. Last week, we discussed the nature and role of the theological virtues.

3. This week, we are going to discuss counterattacks of the enemy, including the re-awakening of the capital sins and lukewarmness, and we'll end with a training protocol to prevent backsliding in the spiritual life.

II. The Counterattacks of the Enemy

1. The Re-Awakening of the Capital Sins

    a. The Inclination to Pride – Beginners plan on many spiritual disciplines or projects but scarcely carry out any. They jump around from confessor to confessor. If they commit a grave sin, they become very frustrated, lose heart, and are annoyed that they are not yet sanctified. However, they also brag about their good work and success.

    b. Sensuality

        i. There is an excessive craving for consolations, and some persons are more attached to consolations than to God Himself.

        ii. Sometimes they start to seek sentimental or sensual friendships, or seeking sensible consolations in prayer can lead to chasing other natural pleasures that are a source of temptation or anxiety.

        iii. Finally, spiritual sloth leads to weariness in performing spiritual exercises.

    c. Spiritual Avarice – Beginners start to cram their lives with spiritual counsels and precepts and read numerous works on the spiritual life instead of putting their time and energy into the fulfillment of their first duty, namely, mortification and perfect interior detachment. They also load themselves with holy images, rosaries, etc.

2. Lukewarmness (Tanquerey, 592-596)

    a. "Lukewarmness consists in a sort of spiritual languor which saps the energies of the will, inspires one with a horror for effort and thus leads to the decline of the Christian life."

    b. "The special danger of this state consists in the gradual weakening of the soul's energies, a condition fraught with more danger than the commission of some isolated mortal sin."

    c. The effects of lukewarmness include the blinding of conscience, a gradual weakening of the will that can reach the point where one loathes effort, and this can be not easy to repair because it occurs almost insensibly.

III. Application

1. Summary: The goal of the Illuminative Way is to follow Christ by the imitation of His virtues. The ideal we strive to realize day by day is to make Jesus the center of our thoughts, our affections, and our entire lives. Doubtless, in the course of our progress in the spiritual life, we are to expect counterattacks on the part of our enemies. The Seven Capital Vices seek more subtly to reassert themselves, and, if we are not on our guard against them, they will cause us to fall into a state of lukewarmness.

2. A Training Protocol

    a. Fighting the Seven Capital Sins – Vigilant souls, however, relying on Jesus Christ, repel these attacks, nay, even turn them to profit, using them to strengthen their virtue, and thus prepare themselves for the joys and trials of the Unitive Way.

    b. The remedies of lukewarmness – Men need to be converted by going to confession often, returning to the fervent practice of the exercises of piety (ex., Prayer, examination of conscience, doing God's will), and start practicing the virtues and fulfilling the duties of one's state in life.

    c. Keep the Rule!