CHAPTER 5 OF 11 · PREACHED OCTOBER 4, 2026 · 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Greed

Also called avarice



Isaiah 5:1-7 (Song of the Vineyard) · Psalm 80 · Philippians 4:6-9 · Matthew 21:33-43 (the Wicked Tenants)

I The Teaching

In the Readings: A Vineyard, Entrusted

- A landowner plants and equips a vineyard, leases it to tenants, and goes away: the arrangement assumes trust, not ownership, on their side

> *"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance." (Matthew 21:38)*

Nature

> *"Covetousness is defined as immoderate love of possessing." (Aquinas, Summa II–II, Q. 118)*

- Tanquerey: avarice is "the inordinate love of earthly goods," and the disorder can lie in the intention (wealth as an end in itself), the manner of seeking it (eagerness "regardless of the rights of others"), or the manner of using it (hoarding, niggardliness, "the classical type known as the miser").

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 118, a. 8) derives avarice's daughters from its two excesses: holding on too tightly, and acquiring too eagerly, the latter showing up first in the mind, then in deeds of force or deceit.

- **Insensibility to mercy:** From excess in keeping: the heart hardens and is no longer moved to help the needy with what it has.
- **Restlessness:** From excess in acquiring, in the mind: the anxious, never-satisfied striving of one who always needs more ("the covetous man shall not be satisfied with money," Eccles 5:9).
- **Violence:** Acquiring by force: taking what we want through power over another.
- **Falsehood:** Acquiring by deceit in words: lying to get or keep what we want.
- **Perjury:** Falsehood sealed with an oath: calling on God to back up the lie.
- **Fraud:** Deceit in deeds regarding things: cheating, false measures, dishonest dealing.
- **Treachery:** Deceit in deeds against persons: betraying someone for gain. Aquinas's example is Judas selling Christ for thirty pieces of silver.

In the Readings

- The tenants embody violence and insensibility to mercy: second and third chances from the owner are answered with beatings and murder.

- Their plot against the son, "come, let us kill him and acquire his inheritance", is treachery, the same daughter Aquinas illustrates with Judas.
- Greed doesn't always look like hoarding money. It can be hoarding credit, time, control or attention.

Effects

> *"You cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24, cited by Tanquerey)*

- Tanquerey: avarice is, at root, a mistrust of God's fatherly providence, replaced by trust in "the abundance of riches"; a species of idolatry ("the golden calf"); it crowds the heart, which is meant to be God's temple, with anxieties and cares; and, perhaps counterintuitively, it "leads to lack of mortification and to sensuality," since a heart fixed on money either spends it on pleasure or clings to the money itself as an idol
- Isaiah's vineyard song adds the social dimension: "he looked for justice, but see, bloodshed"; greed's harvest is always violence somewhere downstream

Remedies

- Tanquerey's central conviction: wealth is a means, not an end, we are stewards who will "render an account to the Sovereign Judge," and riches "pass away with time"

> *"Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matthew 6:19-20)*

- The most effective practical remedy Tanquerey names is direct and countercultural: give generously to the poor, "a gift to the poor is a loan to God"
- Philippians 4:6-9 supplies the interior side: the peace that comes from trusting God rather than gripping our own resources

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Created goods are "only that, a means" (Friends of God 118); Tanquerey's stewardship point in the language of ordinary life.
- Detachment is a source of joy and peace; attachment produces sadness and hinders dealing with God (Friends of God 117-118). The rich young man went away sad (Mk 10:22).
- Not inventing needs (The Way 630, 632). For ordinary Christians, true poverty is neither negligence nor slovenliness (Friends of God 122); detachment in the middle of the world, not flight from it.
- "As having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:10); "do not be anxious about your life" (Lk 12:22); trust in Providence as avarice's direct contrary.
- Time is a treasure too (Friends of God 39): we are administrators of our time as of our money, and will render an account of both (Mt 25:24); this backs up the riff on hoarding time.

Taking It Home

- Everything we "have" was entrusted, not owned outright
- The vineyard was never the tenants' to keep: the only question is what we do with what's been lent to us

II Examination of Conscience

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit, help me to see my sins clearly, to be truly sorry for them, and to trust in your mercy. Amen.

How to read the ◆ GRAVE MATTER tag

A question with this tag concerns a serious matter. A sin is mortal only when grave matter is chosen with full knowledge and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857), and fear, habit or other factors can lessen responsibility. If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest.

Greed itself

- ☐ Do I love money and possessions more than the right measure, more than I need to live well, care for my family and fulfill my duties?
- ☐ Is money my security, or my scoreboard, instead of God?
- ☐ Have I thought often about what I do not yet have?
- ☐ Have I been unable to enjoy what I have, or to share it?

Insensibility to mercy

- ☐ Has my heart hardened to people in need?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I refused to help someone in serious need when I easily could have? (CCC 2446-2447)
- ☐ Do I give to God and to the poor from what is left over rather than first?

Restlessness: always needing more

- ☐ Am I anxious and never satisfied, always needing “one more”?
- ☐ Do I buy things to fill an empty place inside?

Violence and pressure

- ☐ Have I used power, pressure or intimidation to get what I want?

Falsehood and perjury

- ☐ Have I lied to get or keep money or things?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I sworn falsely, calling on God to back a lie? (CCC 2152)

Fraud

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I stolen, or kept something that was not mine, of significant value? (CCC 2408, 2412: restitution is owed)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I cheated in business, on taxes, on insurance or in a sale? (CCC 2409)

- [ ] Have I padded expenses, misused company time or resources, or failed to pay debts I could pay?

Treachery: trading a person for a thing

- [ ] Have I betrayed a friend, family member or colleague for money or advantage?

Hoarding beyond money

- [ ] Have I hoarded my time, my attention or control, refusing to give them to God, family or the needy?

What greed has done

- [ ] Has work swallowed time that belongs to God or my family?
- [ ] Has worry about money crowded out prayer and peace?
- [ ] Have my spending or my debts harmed my family?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I give first, setting aside my gift to God and the poor before anything else?
- [ ] Do I see myself as a steward who will render an account, not an owner?
- [ ] Have I given away something I would rather keep?
- [ ] Do I resist inventing needs (The Way 630)?
- [ ] Do I thank God for His gifts each day?
- [ ] Do I trust God's providence: "Do not be anxious about your life" (Luke 12:22)?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do my spouse and I make financial decisions honestly and together?
- [ ] Have I hidden purchases or debts from my spouse?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I spend on myself in ways that leave little room for generosity?

Parents

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I failed to provide for my family when I could? (1 Timothy 5:8)
- [ ] Am I teaching my children generosity, or only how to get more?

Young people

- [ ] Have I taken anything that isn't mine, from a store, a friend or my family?
- [ ] Do I always want the newest phone, clothes or games?

At work

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Do I pay employees and contractors justly and on time? (CCC 2434)
- [ ] Have I given an honest day's work for my pay?

Beneath the surface

These are not accusations but invitations to let Christ heal what lies underneath.

- [ ] Was there a season when there wasn't enough (a lost job, a divorce, a hard childhood) that still drives my gripping?
- [ ] Do I believe that no one will take care of me?
- [ ] Have I vowed never to be in need again?
- [ ] Can I trust that "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (Matthew 6:32)?

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

III Meditation: The Vineyard Was a Gift

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 21:33-43

Find a quiet place, maybe out on the porch in the evening or looking out over Old Hickory Lake as the light goes gold. Take a slow breath.

The One who made all of this is here with you now. Everything you see is His gift, and so are you.

When you are ready, imagine the landowner in the parable planting his vineyard. He clears the stones, sets the vines, builds a wall and a tower and a wine press. He thinks of everything. Then he hands it over to tenants and goes away. He trusts them.

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Now look at your own life the same way. Your home. Your work. Your family. Your health. Your time. Your talents. Your faith. Walk slowly through each one and say, "This was placed in my hands."

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Watch what the tenants do when the harvest comes. They don't deny the vineyard belongs to the owner. They simply stop living as if it does. Ask yourself where you have done the same. Where have you started to grip what was only lent to you? Your money? Your schedule? Your control over how things go?

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Underneath the gripping there is often a fear: that no one will take care of you, that there won't be enough. Maybe it comes from a hard season in your life, a lost job, a lean year, a childhood without much. Bring that fear to the Lord now and hold it up to Him.

Hear Jesus say: "Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." Let your hands, literally, open in your lap. Sit with open hands for a moment.

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Ask Him: "What do You want me to let go of this week?" Maybe it is a gift to someone in need. Maybe it is an hour you've been hoarding. Maybe it's the first portion of your paycheck, given before anything else. Let Him answer.

Close by praying the Suscipe of St. Ignatius: "Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me."

How to Use This Guide

The Teaching

Each chapter begins with the outline of that Sunday's homily: the readings, what the sin is, the sins it gives rise to (its "daughters"), what it does to us, and its remedies. Read it slowly. Look up the references that catch your attention.

Examination of Conscience

Use it before Confession, or as a nightly examen. You don't have to answer every question at once; let the Holy Spirit show you what matters. Each examination ends with questions for particular states of life and a few questions about the wounds beneath our sins.

Meditation

A guided prayer with that Sunday's Gospel. Find a quiet place and read it slowly. Where you see a pause, stop and stay with the Lord for a while.

Questions tagged ◆ GRAVE MATTER concern serious matters. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must all be present together: grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857). Fear, habit, ignorance, immaturity and other factors can lessen responsibility (Catechism 1735, 2352). The tag does not mean you have committed a mortal sin. It means the question deserves special care.

Mortal sins should be confessed, in kind and number as best you can recall, before receiving Holy Communion (Catechism 1385, 1456-1457). If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest. That is why he is there.

Come to Confession

Saturday	7:30 AM and 3:30 PM
Sunday	7:30 AM, 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM (Spanish) and 5:00 PM
Monday–Friday	5:30 AM and 8:15 AM
Wednesday	also 5:00 PM

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