CHAPTER 8 OF 11 · PREACHED NOVEMBER 15, 2026 · 33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Lust

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31 · Psalm 128 · 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 · Matthew 25:14-30 (Parable of the Talents)

I The Teaching

In the Readings: Charm and What Lasts

- This Sunday's Gospel is the parable of the talents. The third servant buried his gift out of fear, just as Adam hid out of fear ("I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid," Genesis 3:10). There are two ways to fail the gift of love: squander it, or bury it in shame. Proverbs 31 is the portrait of the one who invests.

> "*Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.*" (*Proverbs 31:30*)

- The whole poem catalogs her work, generosity, and strength: then explicitly sets that apart from charm and beauty
- This is not a poem against beauty. It is a poem about what beauty can't tell you.

Nature

> "*Lust consists essentially in exceeding the order and mode of reason.*" (*Aquinas, Summa II-II, Q. 153*)

- Tanquerey: the pleasure attached to these acts is good and God-given, ordered to marriage; lust is that same pleasure sought outside that order, "not merely exterior actions," but the interior fancies, thoughts, and desires that lead to them.

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 153, a. 5) explains lust's daughters as what happens to the higher powers when the lower appetite is "most vehemently intent" on pleasure. Four disorder the reason's four acts; four disorder the will.

- **Blindness of mind:** Reason's first act, grasping the good, is darkened; the true good stops being seen clearly. Aquinas cites Daniel 13:56: "Beauty hath deceived thee."
- **Rashness (precipitation):** Reason's second act, counsel, is skipped: acting without deliberating.
- **Thoughtlessness (inconsideration):** Reason's third act, judgment, is neglected: failing to weigh what is actually right.
- **Inconstancy:** Reason's fourth act, command, fails to hold: good resolutions are made and then not kept.
- **Self-love:** In the will, regarding the end: an inordinate love of one's own pleasure.

- **Hatred of God:** In the will, the flip side: resentment of God precisely because He forbids the desired pleasure.
- **Love of this world:** In the will, regarding the means: clinging to this life as the place where the pleasure is had.
- **Despair of the world to come:** Held fast by carnal delight, the soul loses its appetite for spiritual joys and ceases to care much for heaven.

In the Readings

- Daniel's "beauty hath deceived thee" and Proverbs' "charm is deceptive" name the same blindness from opposite sides: lust fixates on the surface and mistakes it for the whole person.
- The poem's woman of worth is the opposite of inconstancy and rashness: steady, deliberate, faithful in small things over years.

Effects

- Tanquerey: unchecked, lust forms "tyrannical habits," kills relish for prayer, and makes the soul "a prey to selfishness"; "the will becomes the slave of this shameful passion"; and the mind itself grows "dull and weak" as its vital energy is spent on the senses
- He calls it, next to pride, the single greatest obstacle to spiritual growth: precisely because it destroys the balance of the faculties rather than merely adding one more fault to the list

Remedies

- Deep convictions: "you are the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19) and members of Christ's own body, reasons the body itself matters, not just the soul
- Avoidance of occasions: guard the eyes especially ("whoever looks with lust has already committed adultery," Matthew 5:28), and the imagination, touch, and idle time that feed it
- Mortification and prayer together: Tanquerey singles out frequent Confession and Communion as the most effective remedy in the tradition, citing St. Philip Neri's ministry to young men
- Chastity as the contrary virtue is clarity, not just restraint: "fear of the Lord" in Proverbs is the clear-sightedness that keeps what's fleeting from being mistaken for what lasts

Theology of the Body: The Featured Frame

- John Paul II built a whole cycle of the Theology of the Body on the one verse Tanquerey cites: "whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt 5:28; TOB 24-63). Christ appeals to the heart, not only to behavior.
- The spousal meaning of the body: the body is made to express the gift of self (TOB 13-15). Man "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself" (Gaudium et Spes 24). Lust is the counterfeit, taking instead of giving.
- Karol Wojtyła's personalistic norm (Love and Responsibility): the opposite of love is not hatred but using. A person is never an object of use; the only fitting response to a person is love. This is lust's "blindness of mind" in modern terms.
- Before sin, "they were naked and felt no shame" (Gen 2:25). Shame arrives with concupiscence, as a defense of the person against being used (TOB 12-13, 27-28).

- Not Manichaean: Christ's words do not accuse the body or desire. They call the heart to recover the ability to see the person in the body (cf. TOB 45-46). Purity is freedom and clear sight, which is exactly the Proverbs 31 contrast between fleeting charm and lasting worth.

The Wound Beneath the Sin

- Lust and pornography are often a counterfeit search for intimacy and comfort. They grow from wounds of rejection, abandonment, or shame, and from the lie "No one could love me if they really knew me."
- Pastoral order matters: shame hides, but guilt can be confessed. The first word to a struggling person is that he or she is loved, and the Father runs to meet the prodigal. Point people to Confession, and name that help (spiritual direction, counseling) is available and normal.
- Look ahead to the All Saints chapter: the Beatitude "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God" answers lust's blindness. Purity is not seeing less; it is seeing truly.

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Chastity is "a joyful affirmation," an essentially positive virtue rather than a list of refusals (Friends of God 178; The Way 144): "glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:20).
- Positive struggle far from the main walls of the fortress (Friends of God 180-181); guarding the senses and the heart in small things, long before a crisis.
- Human love is holy: matrimony is "an authentic supernatural vocation" (Christ is Passing By 23). The woman of worth in Proverbs 31 is a portrait of that vocation lived well.
- Means: courageously fleeing occasions (The Way 131-134); decency and modesty; daily prayer and mortification; frequent Confession and Communion; complete sincerity in spiritual direction.
- Ask for purity through Our Lady, and with the leper's prayer: "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean" (Lk 5:12).

Taking It Home

- What's on the other side of lust's blindness: seeing a person whole, not just their surface
- Fear of the Lord as clarity, not dread: the thing that actually lets us see straight

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.

This examination is written for adults. A separate version for teens follows. Parents may also want to adapt questions for younger children. Remember that the Catechism notes that culpability can be lessened by immaturity, the force of habit, anxiety and other factors (CCC 2352). If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and let the priest help.

Lust itself

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately entertained lustful thoughts or desires? (Matthew 5:28)
- ☐ Have I looked at people, in person or on screens, as objects for my pleasure?
- ☐ Have I treated the body, or desire itself, as something shameful instead of a gift?

Pornography and media

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I viewed pornography in any form? (CCC 2354)
- ☐ Have I watched shows, movies or content I knew would lead me into temptation?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I produced, sent or shared sexual images? (CCC 2354)

Acts against chastity

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I committed masturbation? (CCC 2352)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I had sexual relations outside of marriage? (CCC 2353)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Am I living with someone as though married without being married? (CCC 2390)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I been unfaithful to my spouse, in deed or by an emotional or online affair? (CCC 2380)

Blindness of mind, rashness, thoughtlessness, inconstancy

- ☐ Has desire clouded my judgment, so that I stopped seeing the person in front of me?
- ☐ Have I acted on impulse without thinking about what was right?
- ☐ Have I made good resolutions about purity and then let them slide?

Self-love, resentment, worldliness

- ☐ Has my own pleasure come first in my relationships?

- [ ] Have I resented God or the Church for teaching about chastity?
- [ ] Have I lost my appetite for heaven and the things of God?

Speech, dress and occasions

- [ ] Have I told or enjoyed impure jokes or stories?
- [ ] Have I dressed or acted in ways meant to provoke desire?
- [ ] Have I freely put myself in situations I knew would lead me into sin?

What lust has done

- [ ] Has this become a habit that has a hold on me?
- [ ] Has it dulled my prayer or made me selfish?
- [ ] Has it wounded my spouse, a relationship or my own self-respect?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I guard my eyes, including on screens ("I made a covenant with my eyes," Job 31:1)?
- [ ] Do I use filters or accountability on my devices, and keep them out of the bedroom at night?
- [ ] Do I go to Confession frequently, especially right after a fall?
- [ ] Do I ask Our Lady for purity every day?
- [ ] Do I practice small mortifications that strengthen the will?
- [ ] Have I been completely sincere about this in Confession or spiritual direction?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have we been open to life, or used contraception contrary to the Church's teaching? (CCC 2370)
- [ ] Do I treat my spouse as a person to love rather than an object to use?
- [ ] Am I generous and tender in our married love?

Parents

- [ ] Do I know what my children are watching and with whom they are talking online?
- [ ] Have I talked with my children about the gift of sexuality before the world does?

Single adults

- [ ] In dating, do I respect the other person's dignity and my own?
- [ ] Do I keep clear boundaries that protect chastity?

At work

- [ ] Have I made inappropriate comments, jokes or advances at work?
- [ ] Do I respect coworkers as persons, never as objects?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Is my lust really a search for love, comfort or relief from loneliness?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that no one could love me as I really am?
- [ ] Have I tried to get what I need without risking real intimacy?
- [ ] Am I hiding something here out of shame, rather than bringing it into the light?
- [ ] Can I believe that the Father runs to meet the prodigal (Luke 15:20) and is not ashamed of me?

For Teens

For teens. Purity is about seeing people as persons, not objects, including yourself. God made your body and your desires good. If anything here is hard to talk about, that's normal. Bring it to Confession; the priest has heard it before and is there to help, not to judge.

My eyes and my mind

- [ ] Do I look at people as objects, in person or online?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately let my mind dwell on impure thoughts?
- [ ] Do I watch shows, videos or music that pull me toward impurity?

My phone

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I looked at pornography? (CCC 2354)
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I sent, asked for, saved or shared sexual pictures of myself or anyone else?
- [ ] Do I keep my phone in my room at night when I know it's a temptation?

My actions

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I committed masturbation? (CCC 2352)
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I done sexual things with someone else? (CCC 2353)
- [ ] Have I pressured anyone, or let myself be pressured, to go farther than I should?

My words and friendships

- [ ] Do I tell dirty jokes, or join in when others talk about people as objects?
- [ ] Do I treat the people I date or like with respect?
- [ ] Have I been honest with my parents about where I go and with whom?

Have I tried?

- [ ] Do I ask Mary for help to be pure?
- [ ] Do I go to Confession soon after I fall, instead of waiting?
- [ ] Have I talked to a parent, priest or trusted adult if this is hard for me?

Underneath

- [ ] Am I lonely, stressed or bored when I'm most tempted?

- [ ] Do I believe I’m only worth something if someone wants me?
- [ ] Can I believe God loves me as I am, and wants to help me?

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 Buried Talent

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 25:14-30

Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted, and take a slow breath.

God is here with you. He made you good, and He is not ashamed of you.

When you are ready, picture a master entrusting his servants with his fortune: five talents to one, two to another, one to the third. A talent was years of wages. Two servants go out and take the risk. They double what they were given.

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Now follow the third servant out to a field. Watch him dig a hole and bury the talent. Hear what he says later: "Out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground." Then remember the first words after the first sin, in the garden: "I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid."

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Your capacity to love, your body, your heart, your desire for closeness, is a talent God has entrusted to you. There are two ways to fail that gift: to spend it cheaply, or to bury it in shame. Ask the Lord gently where you have done either.

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Picture a late night, the house quiet, a little tired and a little lonely, the screen right there. Or a marriage that has gone quiet, and a fantasy that fills the gap. It rarely starts with desire for pleasure. It starts with an ache. Tell Him about the ache.

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Underneath is almost always a longing to be loved, and sometimes a lie: "No one could love me as I really am." Bring that lie into the light now. You don't have to clean yourself up first.

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Now picture the father in the parable of the prodigal son, running down the road to meet his son before the boy can finish his rehearsed speech. Let Him run to you like that. Shame says hide. He says come into the light.

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Hear the master's words to the faithful servants, spoken to you: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, share your master's joy." He isn't waiting to audit you. He wants to share His joy.

Close by praying: "A clean heart create for me, O God; renew within me a steadfast spirit. O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee." If you need to, decide now when you will go to Confession.

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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