Our Lady of the Lake
CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sin: Its Roots and Remedies

A Companion to the Fall 2026 Homily Series

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Hendersonville, Tennessee

A Letter from Your Pastor

Dear friends in Christ,

This fall, Sunday by Sunday, we have looked honestly at sin: where it comes from, how it grows, what it does to us, and how God heals it. Many of you have asked for something to take home and keep for prayer and reflection. This booklet is my answer.

It gathers the teaching from each week of the series, the definitions and outlines drawn from Scripture, St. Thomas Aquinas, Fr. Adolphe Tanquerey, St. Josemaría Escrivá and St. John Paul II. For each chapter I have added an examination of conscience to help you prepare for Confession, and a short meditation to pray with that Sunday's Gospel.

The chapters follow a slightly different order than the homilies. We begin with what sin is, walk through the seven capital sins, and end with our neighbor, the saints and Christ the King. Each chapter notes the Sunday it was preached, because the meditation prays with that Sunday's Gospel.

Please don't read this as a list of accusations. The point of naming sin is freedom. Every saint was a sinner who kept getting up, and the Lord is far more eager to heal us than we are to be healed. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you."

I am praying for you. Please pray for me.

In Christ through Mary,
Rev. Austin Gilstrap
Pastor, Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church

How to Use This Booklet

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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A Frame for the Whole Series

Sin as a turning, not just a breaking of rules

> *"Sin is an act, a word, or a desire contrary to the eternal law." St. Augustine*

- Classic theology names two sides of every sin: a turning away from God (*aversio a Deo*) and a turning toward something created (*conversio ad creaturas*). The second is what we usually notice; the first is what actually happened.
- At the root of each capital sin is the same pair: a mistrust of God, and a self-love that goes looking for satisfaction in something less than God.

Why these seven

- Every capital sin targets something genuinely good: excellence, honor, another's good fortune, money, food, rest, sexuality. None of these is evil in itself.
- The will, by nature, desires total goodness, a fullness no created thing can supply.

> *"Our hearts are restless until they rest in you." St. Augustine, Confessions*

- Each capital sin is what happens when that restless desire, instead of being carried all the way to God, gets parked in a created good and asked to deliver what only God can give. They are called "capital," from the Latin *caput*, "head," because each is a head that gives rise to other sins.

Sin as slavery

- True freedom is not just the ability to choose. It is freedom for excellence: the developed capacity to do good easily, joyfully and well, the way a trained musician plays.
- Vice works in the other direction. Each capital sin, left unchecked, becomes a habit that narrows our freedom. Tanquerey keeps returning to the image: the glutton becomes "a slave to the body"; in lust "the will becomes the slave"; greed makes wealth an idol to be served.

How habits work

- A habit is not a fixed nature. It is a quality we bring into being by repeated acts, and it can be weakened just as truly when those acts fall away.
- The danger of any capital sin is that we start to mistake the habit for our nature: "This is just who I am." That thinking keeps people stuck.
- This is good news. Nothing here is fixed. Small, repeated, opposite acts are how a vice loses its grip and a virtue takes its place.

Joy and pleasure

> *"The happy life is joy born of the truth." St. Augustine, Confessions*

- Pleasure belongs to the senses; joy belongs to the spirit. Several capital sins, gluttony and lust especially, confuse the one for the other.

- Rightly ordered, joy does not destroy pleasure; it refines it. The aim is not less feeling but rightly ordered feeling.

The heart beneath the sin

> *"The human heart has become a battlefield between love and concupiscence." St. John Paul II, Theology of the Body 32:3*

- St. John Paul II reads the three concupiscences of 1 John 2:16 (the flesh, the eyes, the pride of life) as what the Fall did to the heart (TOB 26-28). Desire and the body stay good; what changes is that the logic of gift gives way to the logic of taking (TOB 32:6). Every capital sin is a kind of taking instead of receiving.
- St. Thomas arrives at the same place, mapping the three concupiscences onto the capital sins (Summa I-II, Q. 77, a. 5).
- Sin and wounds are intertwined. An unhealed wound leads us to believe a lie about God or ourselves; the lie hardens into a vow or judgment; the vow bears fruit in a pattern of sin. Common deep wounds include rejection, abandonment, fear, powerlessness, hopelessness, confusion and shame.
- So the remedies always have two sides: the virtues we build by repeated acts, and the healing that comes from encountering Christ. Grace does not destroy nature but perfects it (Summa I, Q. 1, a. 8, ad 2), and it heals nature as well as elevating it.

A necessary balance

- The quest for holiness cannot be reduced to fighting against sin. Our heart plays an important part, and the struggle is centered on the person of Christ (The Way 584).
- Being united to our Lord, living in the state of grace, is "the only thing that really matters" (The Way 297).
- The ordinary means of the supernatural life are prayer, mortification and the sacraments (The Way 997).
- Sadness is "a powerful ally of the enemy" (The Way 662). The struggle against sin should be cheerful, even sporting (The Way 720).
- **Getting up after every fall matters more than never falling.**

The Capital Sins at a Glance

Sin	Its daughters	Opposite virtue	Beatitude
Pride	Through vainglory: boasting, love of novelties, hypocrisy, obstinacy, discord, contention, disobedience	Humility	Blessed are the poor in spirit
Greed	Insensibility to mercy, restlessness, violence, falsehood, perjury, fraud, treachery	Generosity	Blessed are the poor in spirit
Envy	Tale-bearing, detraction, joy at another's misfortune, grief at another's prosperity, hatred	Charity that rejoices in another's good	Blessed are the merciful
Anger	Indignation, swelling of the mind, clamor, contumely, blasphemy, quarreling	Meekness	Blessed are the meek
Lust	Blindness of mind, rashness, thoughtlessness, inconstancy, self-love, hatred of God, love of this world, despair of the world to come	Chastity	Blessed are the clean of heart
Gluttony	Dullness of mind, unseemly joy, loquaciousness, scurrility, uncleanness	Temperance	Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness
Sloth	Despair, faint-heartedness, sluggishness about the commandments, spite, malice, wandering of the mind	Diligence and the joy of charity	Blessed are they who mourn

Daughters follow St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 36, 118, 132, 148, 153, 158; Q. 35). The Beatitude pairings follow the All Saints homily.

CHAPTER 1 OF 11 · PREACHED OCTOBER 18, 2026 · 29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

What Sin Is

Giving to creatures what belongs to God

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6 · Psalm 96 · 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b · Matthew 22:15-21 (“Repay to Caesar”)

I The Teaching

Before we look at the capital sins one by one, a first question: what is sin, and what do all the capital sins have in common?

In the Readings: Whose Image Is This?

- The Pharisees and Herodians set a trap: any answer about the tax will offend either Rome or the people
- Jesus asks for a coin and asks one question: whose image is on it?

> *“Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” (Matthew 22:21)*

- The coin bears Caesar’s image, so it goes to Caesar. The unspoken second half: you bear God’s image (Genesis 1:27), so you go to God

Nature

> *“Sin is an act, a word, or a desire contrary to the eternal law.” (St. Augustine, adopted by Aquinas (Summa I-II, Q. 71, a. 6))*

- Every sin has two elements: aversio a Deo, a turning away from God (the formal element, what makes it sin), and conversio ad creaturas, a disordered turning toward a creature (the material element, what we actually notice doing)
- Rarely does anyone set out to oppose God. We simply reach for a created good and give it the place only God should have. At the base of every sin is a love of self and a mistrust of God
- This is why the tradition calls sin the only absolute evil: physical evils deprive us of finite goods; sin deprives us of the infinite good for which we exist
- Isaiah 45 names the stakes: “I am the Lord, there is no other; there is no God besides me.” Every capital sin is a small attempt to make that sentence false

Kinds of Sin

The distinctions the Church uses to name sin accurately. Many of us carry a vague, anxious or dismissive picture of them.

- **Mortal sin:** A sin that fully realizes the turning away: it destroys charity in the heart and with it the life of grace (CCC 1855). It requires three conditions together, grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (CCC 1857).
- **Venial sin:** A real but partial disorder: it wounds and weakens charity without destroying it. It happens when the matter is light, or when grave matter is chosen without full knowledge or full consent (CCC 1862). Aquinas: the soul keeps its last end but is disordered about the means.

- **Capital sin:** Not a separate category of act but a source: a vice that, by its nature, generates other sins, as a head (caput) directs a body (CCC 1866). The whole fall series has been about these.
- **Sins of thought, word, deed, and omission:** The four ways sin enters, named in the Confiteor itself: "in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do." Omission is the one most easily forgotten.
- **Temptation:** An instigation to evil disguised as a good. To feel temptation is not sin; consenting to it is. But we may not freely place ourselves in it.
- **Occasion of sin:** An outward circumstance, not sought in order to sin, that carries a real danger of sinning. A chosen occasion is already a step down the road.

In the Readings

- The questioners' flattery, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man", is hypocrisy, one of the daughters of vainglory (see the chapter on pride). Jesus names it: "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?"
- Their trap is a textbook occasion of sin, built for someone else to step into

Effects

- The first effect of mortal sin is the loss of friendship with God. Because we are made for that communion, sin also contradicts our own deepest truth: it is self-harm before it is anything else
- Sin damages the whole person: it darkens the intellect, weakens the will, disorders the passions, and inclines us toward more sin
- Repeated, sin hardens into vice, and here the habit notes are useful: we are tempted to confuse a habit with our nature ("this is just who I am"), which is how sin keeps its hold
- No sin is purely private. Every sin touches the Body of Christ and the wider community (cf. Hebrews 12:15)

Remedies

- Give back what bears God's image. If sin is misplaced worship, the first remedy is simply to put God back in first place: the First Commandment as the root of the other nine
- Tanquerey: penance is, "after prayer, the most effective means for cleansing the soul of past faults and even for guarding it against future ones"; the ordinary road for sins after Baptism is the Sacrament of Penance
- A daily examination of conscience, organized by the capital sins, turns this series into a tool for daily life
- Paul's praise of the Thessalonians in the second reading, their "work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope", is what a life given back to God looks like

The Wound Beneath the Sin

- John Paul II reads Genesis 3 as the serpent casting doubt on the Gift. The lie was about God first: that He is a rival who withholds, not a Father who gives (cf. TOB 26:4; Dominum et Vivificantem 37-38). That is the "mistrust of God" underneath every capital sin.
- The lies we believe about the Father are usually the deepest roots of our sin patterns. Confession is not only an accounting for the fruit; it is an encounter with the One who heals the roots.

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Unity of life versus the "double life" (Conversations 114; Friends of God 165): "How long will you go limping with two different opinions?" (1 Kgs 18:21). The coin question asks whether we've split our lives between

two masters.

- Sin is “the mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thes 2:7), yet contrition begins by calmly acknowledging our failures before God (Friends of God 215).
- Sincerity in the examination of conscience: calling things by their real name (Furrow 332), and resisting the “dumb devil” who keeps us silent (Friends of God 188-189; The Way 236).
- A good confession is concrete, concise, clear, and complete, with sorrow and a specific purpose of amendment: at a set time, and ideally with the same priest, so confession becomes guidance too.
- Playing the prodigal son many times a day (Furrow 65; Forge 161): acts of contrition as a source of serenity. End every examination of conscience with one (The Way 246).

Taking It Home

- Caesar gets the coin. God gets you: every part that bears His image, which is all of it
- Each capital sin in the chapters that follow asks the same question: whose image are you living for?

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 chapter's examination is a general one, following the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church. It is a good examination to use before any Confession.

1. I am the Lord your God; you shall not have strange gods before me

- ☐ Have I put anything (money, work, pleasure, a person, my phone) in the place that belongs to God?
- ☐ Do I pray every day?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I been involved in the occult, fortune-telling, horoscopes or superstition? (CCC 2116-2117)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I received Holy Communion while conscious of unconfessed mortal sin? (CCC 1385)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I doubted or denied a truth of the faith deliberately, or despaired of God's mercy? (CCC 2088-2091)

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I blasphemed, speaking against God, the saints or holy things? (CCC 2148)
- ☐ Have I used God's name carelessly or as a curse word?
- ☐ Have I failed to keep a promise or vow made to God?

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I missed Mass on a Sunday or holy day of obligation without a serious reason? (CCC 2181)
- ☐ Do I arrive late or leave early without need, or let my mind wander at Mass on purpose?
- ☐ Have I made Sunday a day of rest, family and worship, or just another workday?

4. Honor your father and your mother

- ☐ Have I been disrespectful or disobedient to my parents?
- ☐ Have I neglected my parents in old age or sickness?
- ☐ Have I neglected my duties to my spouse or children, including their religious formation?

5. You shall not kill

- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I had, encouraged or helped with an abortion, or taken part in euthanasia? (CCC 2272, 2277) Know that God's mercy is greater, and the priest can help.
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I physically harmed anyone, or put lives at risk through drunkenness or recklessness? (CCC 2290)
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I harbored hatred, or led someone into serious sin by my example (scandal)? (CCC 2284-2287, 2303)
- [ ] Have I neglected my health, or harmed my body through drugs, alcohol or self-harm?

6 and 9. You shall not commit adultery; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife

- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately entertained impure thoughts or desires? (Matthew 5:28)
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I viewed pornography, or committed impure acts alone or with others? (CCC 2352-2354)
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I had sexual relations outside of marriage, or been unfaithful to my spouse? (CCC 2353, 2380)
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER In marriage, have we used contraception contrary to the Church's teaching? (CCC 2370)

7 and 10. You shall not steal; you shall not covet your neighbor's goods

- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I stolen, cheated or damaged property of significant value, and not made restitution? (CCC 2408-2412)
- [ ] Have I been dishonest at work, in business or with taxes?
- [ ] Have I been envious or greedy?
- [ ] Have I been generous to the poor and to the Church?

8. You shall not bear false witness

- [ ] Have I lied?
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I damaged someone's reputation seriously by calumny or detraction? (CCC 2477-2479)
- [ ] Have I gossiped, judged rashly or revealed secrets?

The precepts of the Church

- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I gone at least a year without confessing a grave sin? (CCC 2042)
- [ ] GRAVE MATTER Have I failed to receive Holy Communion at least once during the Easter season? (CCC 2042)
- [ ] Do I keep the days of fasting and abstinence?
- [ ] Do I help provide for the needs of the Church?

Thought, word, deed and omission

- [ ] In thought: what have I dwelt on that I should have let go?
- [ ] In word: what have I said that wounded or deceived?
- [ ] In deed: what have I done that I knew was wrong?

- [ ] In omission: what good did I know I should do, and leave undone?
- [ ] Have I freely walked into situations I knew would lead me into sin (near occasions)?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Have I been patient, faithful and generous with my spouse?

Single adults

- [ ] Have I lived my single life as a gift for God and others, or only for myself?

Parents

- [ ] Have I taught my children the faith by word and example, and brought them to Mass?

Young people

- [ ] Have I been honest with my parents?
- [ ] Have I used my phone to hurt anyone, or looked at things I shouldn't?

At work

- [ ] Have I been honest and just in my work?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Every sin starts with a small lie about God. Which lie sounds most like my own voice: "No one will make this right," "He loves them more," "I don't need Him," "He won't provide," or "No one will comfort me"?
- [ ] Do I live as though God were a rival who holds out on me, rather than a Father who gives?
- [ ] In my next Confession, can I name the lie as well as the sin?
- [ ] Can I trust that "He who did not spare his own Son… will also give us everything else along with him" (Romans 8:32)?

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: Whose Image Do You Bear?

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 22:15-21

Find a quiet place and take a slow breath.

God is already here with you. You don't have to go looking for Him; He has already found you.

When you are ready, take a coin or a dollar bill from your pocket or purse and hold it in your hand. Look at the face on it.

Now hear the scene: the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus, and Jesus asking for a coin. "Whose image is this?" "Caesar's." "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."

• • •

Set the coin down. Now look at your own hand. You bear an image too. "God created mankind in his image." Caesar's face is on the coin. God's face is on you. So what belongs to God? All of you.

• • •

Ask yourself honestly: to what have I given His place? It's rarely dramatic. Usually it's something good, asked to do what only God can do. My work. My comfort. My reputation. My kids' success. My phone. Let the Lord show you one.

• • •

Now go back to the garden and hear the serpent's first words: "Did God really say...?" Every sin starts with a small lie about God: that He's holding out on you, that He isn't really for you. Which version of that lie do you hear most? "He won't provide." "He loves others more." "I don't need Him." "No one will comfort me." Name yours.

• • •

Then hear the truth that answers it, from St. Paul: "He who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?" Look at a crucifix if one is near. That is God's answer to "Did God really say?"

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Think about your next Confession. When will you go? Picture yourself kneeling there. Bring not only what you did, but the lie underneath it: "Father, I've been living as if God won't provide." That is where healing reaches the root.

Close by praying the Act of Contrition slowly, meaning each line. Then pick up the coin and put it away. Caesar gets the coin. God gets you.

Anger

Sirach 27:30 to 28:7 · Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12 (R. "The Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger.") · Romans 14:7-9 · Matthew 18:21-35 (the Unforgiving Servant)

I The Teaching

In the Readings: Peter's Question

- Peter asks how often he must forgive, as many as seven times?, thinking he's already being generous
- Jesus answers seventy-seven times: no ceiling at all

> "*Seizing him, the man choked him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'*" (*Matthew* 18:28)

Nature

> "*Anger is the desire for revenge*" (*Aquinas, Summa II–II, Q. 158; revenge "may be desired both well and ill."*)

- Tanquerey distinguishes lawful anger ("the ardent, but rational desire to visit upon the guilty a just retribution"; Christ cleansing the Temple) from anger as capital vice: "a violent and inordinate desire of punishing others."
- Tanquerey names degrees: a mere impulse of impatience, then agitation, then violence, then fury ("temporary insanity"), and finally implacable hatred that wishes the offender ill
- Aquinas, quoting Gregory: "zealous anger troubles the eye of reason, whereas sinful anger blinds it"; the difference is proportion, not the feeling itself

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 158, a. 7) sorts anger's six daughters by where anger lives: first in the heart, then in the mouth, then in deeds.

- **Indignation:** In the heart, directed at the other person: judging the one who wronged us as unworthy, someone who had no right to treat us that way and now deserves no decent treatment in return.
- **Swelling of the mind:** In the heart, within ourselves: the mind filling up with schemes and fantasies of revenge, rehearsing what we'll say, how we'll get even. Aquinas cites Job 15:2, the man who fills 'his stomach with burning heat.'
- **Clamor:** In words, in their manner: disordered, confused, raised-voice speech, anger audible in how we talk before it shows in what we say. Aquinas ties it to calling one's brother 'Raca' (Mt 5:22).
- **Contumely:** In words, in their content, against our neighbor: insulting, injurious speech that dishonors the other person, usually to their face.
- **Blasphemy:** In words, against God: anger breaking out in injurious speech aimed at God himself, blaming or cursing Him for what we suffer.
- **Quarreling:** In deeds: anger passing from words into action that injures, the shove, the slammed door, the fight (Latin rixa).

In the Readings

- Swelling of the mind is exactly what the servant does, with no gap at all between being forgiven and going to collect.
- Indignation is what lets him treat an equal as beneath him; quarreling is his hand on the other man's throat.
- Ever caught yourself rehearsing an argument in the shower? That is swelling of the mind in miniature.

Effects

> *Tanquerey, citing Seneca: unrestrained anger's fruits include "treasons, murders, poisonings, divisions in families, dissensions and civil wars."St. Gregory: unchecked anger costs us "good judgment," "gentleness," "the sense of justice," and "the spirit of recollection" needed for union with God.*

- Sirach names the specific incoherence: nursing wrath while expecting mercy for ourselves is nonsensical, almost the Lord's Prayer stated as a diagnosis before it's stated as a petition

Remedies

- Tanquerey, practically: reflect before acting; when anger takes you by surprise, "drive it away speedily" rather than entering into a parley with it; divert the mind from the injury; call on God "as the Apostles when tossed by the wind and storm"
- For anger that has hardened into rancor: root it out through charity grounded in our common sonship, recall the Our Father's own terms, Christ still calling Judas "friend" at the moment of betrayal, praying for his executioners from the cross
- The contrary virtue, meekness, is a golden mean: not the absence of anger, but anger ordered by reason toward what's actually just

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Charity is the root remedy: knowing how to forgive, never holding a grudge or being resentful (The Way 452, 686, 689; Forge 802, 954).
- Exercising dominion over bad moods (The Way 10, 20); anger's first degree, impatience, is fought in small daily moments, not only in big confrontations.
- "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2); being understanding and patient with others (Friends of God 233; The Way 174, 446, 463).

Taking It Home

- Return to the king's question: "should you not have had pity, as I had pity on you?"
- The debt we've been forgiven dwarfs anything anyone owes 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

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Anger itself

- ☐ Have I wanted someone to be punished or "paid back" more than to be healed or corrected?
- ☐ Has my anger been out of proportion to what actually happened?
- ☐ Have I aimed my anger at the wrong person, taking out on my family what really came from work, traffic or my own frustration?
- ☐ Have I kept anger burning for days, months or years instead of letting it go?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately wished serious harm on someone, or wanted to see them badly hurt? (CCC 2302)
- ☐ Have I refused to forgive someone, even in my heart, while still asking God to forgive me?
- ☐ On the other side: have I stayed silent and unmoved when someone was truly being wronged and I could have spoken?

Indignation: deciding they deserve nothing

- ☐ Have I decided that someone who hurt me no longer deserves basic kindness or respect?
- ☐ Have I treated a person as beneath me because of how they treated me?

Swelling of the mind: rehearsing revenge

- ☐ Do I replay old hurts, rehearse arguments, or imagine ways of getting even?
- ☐ Have I let resentment crowd out my prayer, even during Mass?
- ☐ Have I plotted, even in small ways, to make someone look bad or feel bad?

Clamor: the raised voice

- ☐ Have I yelled, slammed doors, or spoken in a harsh, cutting tone?
- ☐ Have I used the silent treatment or a cold shoulder to punish someone?

Contumely: the insult

- ☐ Have I insulted, mocked, belittled or called someone names, in person, by text or online?
- ☐ Have I said things I knew would wound, especially in an argument with someone close to me?

Blasphemy: anger aimed at God

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I spoken against God, cursed Him, or used His name in anger? (CCC 2148)
- [ ] Have I blamed God for what I suffer and refused to speak to Him?

Quarreling: when words become deeds

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I seriously hurt someone physically in anger?
- [ ] Have I hit, shoved or grabbed someone in anger?
- [ ] Have I broken or thrown things, or frightened others with my temper?
- [ ] Have I driven aggressively, tailgated or tried to "teach someone a lesson" on the road?

What my anger has done

- [ ] Has my anger caused division in my marriage, family, friendships or parish?
- [ ] Has it robbed me of peace, or made it hard to pray?
- [ ] Have I asked God for mercy while refusing mercy to others? ("Could anyone nourish anger against another and expect healing from the Lord?" Sirach 28:3)

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] When anger rises, do I pause before I speak or act?
- [ ] Do I bring my anger to God in prayer instead of arguing with it in my head?
- [ ] Do I pray, by name, for the people who have hurt me (Matthew 5:44)?
- [ ] Where it is possible and safe, have I made the first move toward reconciliation?
- [ ] When I pray the Our Father, do I mean "as we forgive those who trespass against us"?
- [ ] Do I fight the small daily battles against impatience and bad moods?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I bring up old offenses in new arguments?
- [ ] Have I refused to be reconciled before going to sleep (Ephesians 4:26)?

Parents

- [ ] Do I discipline in anger rather than with calm firmness?
- [ ] Have I apologized to my children when I lost my temper with them?

Single adults

- [ ] Have I let loneliness or disappointment turn into bitterness toward others or toward God?

Young people

- [ ] Do I lash out at my parents, brothers or sisters?
- [ ] Have I posted or sent something cruel when I was angry?

At work

- [ ] Have I humiliated a coworker or employee, or spoken harshly to someone serving me?
- [ ] Do I carry workplace resentments home?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Is there a hurt underneath my anger that I have never brought to God?
- [ ] Have I made a quiet vow, like “No one will ever do that to me again,” that now keeps me on guard with everyone?
- [ ] Have I confused forgiveness with saying “it didn’t matter,” or with having to trust again? (Forgiveness releases the debt to God; trust can be rebuilt slowly.)
- [ ] Am I angry at myself, unable to accept that God has forgiven 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 Debt You Carry

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 18:21-35

Find a quiet place. Maybe it's your car in the driveway after work, engine off, before you go inside. Take a slow breath and let the day settle.

God is already here with you. He is not waiting for you to get everything right first; He is simply glad you have come.

When you are ready, hear Peter's question as if it were your own: "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive?" Who comes to mind when you hear that? Don't push the face away. Let it come.

• • •

Now imagine the servant standing before the king. He owes ten thousand talents, more than he could pay in a hundred lifetimes. He falls to his knees and asks for time. And the king doesn't give him time. He gives him everything. The debt is gone.

That servant is you. Think of your own sins over the years, the ones you've confessed and the ones you'd rather not remember. Each one forgiven. Stand there for a moment and let the king look at you with mercy.

• • •

Now follow the servant out the door. Notice how quickly it happens. He walks out forgiven and grabs the first person who owes him a little. Ask yourself honestly: where have I walked out of Confession, or out of Mass, and gone straight back to keeping score? At the kitchen table. In the carpool line. Stuck in traffic on Vietnam Veterans Boulevard, rehearsing what I should have said.

• • •

Bring the person you named earlier before the Lord. You don't have to feel warm toward them. You don't have to pretend it didn't hurt. Just say, as honestly as you can: "Lord, I hand this debt to You. You judge justly. I won't carry it anymore." If you can't say it yet, say: "Lord, make me willing."

• • •

Hear the king's question, spoken now to you, gently: "Should you not have had pity, as I had pity on you?" Let it be an invitation, not an accusation.

Close by praying the Our Father slowly. When you reach "as we forgive those who trespass against us," stop, and say the name.

Envy

Isaiah 55:6-9 · Psalm 145:2-3, 8-9, 17-18 · Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a · Matthew 20:1-16a (Workers in the Vineyard)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: A Fair Wage, an Unfair Feeling

- A landowner pays every worker the same wage, from the dawn crew to the one hired at 5 p.m.

> *"Are you envious because I am generous?" (Matthew 20:15)*

- The literal idiom is closer to "is your eye evil"; the ancient shorthand for envy itself. Nobody in the parable is shorted anything; the grief is purely comparative

Nature

> *"Envy is sorrow for another's good." (Aquinas, quoting St. John DamasceneTanquerey: envy is "a tendency to be saddened by another's good as if that good constituted an affront to our own superiority"; it "proceeds from pride, which can bear neither superior nor rival.")*

- Tanquerey draws two useful distinctions: envy grieves at another's good; jealousy fears losing one's own good to another; emulation (a virtue) imitates and even seeks to surpass another's good qualities, but by fair means and for a worthy end

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 36, a. 4) traces envy's daughters as a sequence: the stages envy moves through as it tries to bring another person down.

- **Tale-bearing (whispering):** The first move, made in secret: quietly lowering someone's standing behind their back, often sowing discord between them and others.
- **Detraction:** The same move made openly: publicizing or emphasizing another's faults to diminish how others regard them.
- **Joy at another's misfortune:** If the effort succeeds: a secret satisfaction when the rival stumbles or is taken down a peg.
- **Grief at another's prosperity:** If the effort fails: a deepened sadness as the rival keeps flourishing anyway.
- **Hatred:** The end of the road: sorrow at another's good, left to fester, turns into ill will toward the person himself, wishing him evil outright.

In the Readings

- Grief at another's prosperity is, almost word for word, what the all-day laborers do.
- Their grumbling against the landowner is detraction in its infancy: the complaint that aims to make someone else's good look like an injustice.

Effects

- Tanquerey: envy stirs hatred toward those we envy; it sows discord even within families (he points to Joseph and his brothers); it drives an immoderate, competitive scramble for riches and honors just to surpass a rival; and it destroys the envious person's own peace of soul, since the rival is rarely, if ever, fully "overcome"
- Envy almost always arrives wearing the mask of justice: "It's not fair."

Remedies

- Tanquerey's negative remedy: scorn the first stirrings of envy as something vile, the way one would a snake; distract the mind; remind yourself that another's good in no way subtracts from your own
- His positive remedy draws on our incorporation into one Body: "instead of being saddened at the superiority of our brethren we must rejoice… since their superiority contributes to the common good and to our own particular welfare" (cf. Romans 12:15)
- Cultivate emulation instead: imitating and even trying to surpass another's virtue, but for the glory of God and the good of others rather than to defeat a rival

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Not judging others (The Way 442, 451, 454; Furrow 365); detraction's cure begins in the mind before it reaches the mouth.
- The Communion of Saints: the good deeds of others have incalculable repercussions that reach us too (The Way 755; Forge 630, 640); the same Body-of-Christ remedy Tanquerey gives, from another angle.
- Universal charity, and refusing "collective egoism" as a family, clique, or nation (Furrow 303, 315); envy between groups, not just between persons.

Taking It Home

- Isaiah: "my thoughts are not your thoughts"; envy assumes a fixed pie; grace doesn't work by that arithmetic
- God's generosity to someone else was never a subtraction from you

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.

Envy itself

- [ ] Has someone else's good news made me sad, as if it took something from me?
- [ ] Do I compare my life, my family, my looks or my success with others?
- [ ] Have I felt that God has been more generous to others than to me?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately wished serious harm to someone because of what they have? (CCC 2539)
- [ ] Have I been unable to praise someone sincerely?

Tale-bearing: lowering them in secret

- [ ] Have I quietly passed along things that make someone look worse?
- [ ] Have I tried to stir up others against someone I envy?

Detraction: running them down openly

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I revealed someone's hidden faults or sins without a real need, seriously damaging their reputation? (CCC 2477)
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I said things about someone that I knew were false? (calumny, CCC 2477)
- [ ] Have I made someone's achievement sound unfair or undeserved ("It's not fair," "they just got lucky")?

Joy at their misfortune

- [ ] Have I felt satisfaction when someone I envy stumbled, failed or was embarrassed?
- [ ] Have I enjoyed hearing bad news about a rival?

Grief at their prosperity

- [ ] Do I grow sadder as others keep flourishing?
- [ ] Have I avoided people, unfollowed them or skipped celebrations because their happiness hurt?

Hatred: the end of the road

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I let envy harden into ill will, wishing someone evil? (CCC 2303)

What envy has done

- [ ] Has envy caused division in my family, among friends, or in the parish?
- [ ] Have I pushed myself into a competitive scramble for money, status or attention just to keep pace with others?
- [ ] Has comparing robbed me of peace and gratitude?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] When envy stirs, do I reject it right away instead of feeding it?
- [ ] Do I remember that another person's good takes nothing from mine?
- [ ] Do I pray for the people I envy, asking God to bless them even more?
- [ ] Have I congratulated someone sincerely, out loud?
- [ ] Do I let others' virtues inspire me to grow (emulation) rather than make me resentful?
- [ ] Do I thank God each day for the gifts He has given me?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I compare my spouse or my marriage with others?
- [ ] Do I compete with my spouse instead of rejoicing in his or her gifts?

Parents

- [ ] Do I compare my children with one another, or with other people's children?
- [ ] Do I push my children to succeed so I can look good?

Single adults

- [ ] Have I resented friends who married, had children, or seem to have the life I wanted?

Young people

- [ ] Do I compare myself with others on social media?
- [ ] Have I talked behind someone's back because I was jealous of them?

At work

- [ ] Have I undermined a coworker's success, or taken credit for their work?
- [ ] Have I resented someone's promotion and let it sour my work?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Was there a time I was passed over, left out or measured and found lacking, that still shapes how I see others?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that my worth depends on how I measure against others?
- [ ] Do I believe there is only so much of God's love to go around?
- [ ] Can I hear God say to me, "I have called you by name: you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1)?

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 Five O'Clock Workers

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 20:1-16a

Find a few quiet minutes. Take a slow breath and let your shoulders drop.

The Lord is here with you, and He sees you as you are. There is nothing you have to prove to Him.

When you are ready, picture a late afternoon in a small town square, the heat starting to break. Some men are still standing around. No one has hired them all day.

Stand with them for a moment. You know that feeling: the one not picked for the team, passed over for the promotion, still waiting while everyone else seems to have their life figured out. Let yourself feel it.

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Now the landowner comes back. It's five o'clock. There's barely an hour of work left, and he still comes looking. "Why do you stand here idle all day?" "Because no one has hired us." He says, "You too go into my vineyard." He keeps coming back for the ones left standing.

• • •

Now move to the other side of the line, with the workers who started at dawn. Watch the five o'clock men receive a full day's wage. Feel what rises in you. Be honest. Is it joy for them? Or is it "That's not fair"?

Think of the last time someone else's good news stung. A friend's new house on the lake. A neighbor's son who made varsity when yours didn't. A coworker who got the credit. Name it before God, without excuses.

• • •

Hear the landowner say to you, kindly: "Are you envious because I am generous?" Then hear the deeper truth underneath it. His generosity to them was never taken from you. You received your full wage too. Ask Him to show you what He has given you that you have stopped seeing.

• • •

Now do something hard. Bring to mind the person you envy, and ask God to bless them even more than they already are. Say their name. Ask Him to give them joy, peace and every good thing. Notice what happens in your heart as you pray.

Rest a moment in the Lord's words from Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts." His love is not a fixed pie. There is more than enough for you.

Pride

Ezekiel 18:25-28 · Psalm 25 · Philippians 2:1-11 · Matthew 21:28-32 (the Two Sons)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: Two Sons

> *"He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards changed his mind and went." (Matthew 21:29"Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you."; Matthew 21:31)*

- The tax collectors and prostitutes knew they were sinners; the priests and elders didn't think they needed to change anything

Nature

> *"Pride is the appetite for excellence in excess of right reason." (Aquinas, Summa II-II, Q. 162)*

- Tanquerey: pride is "an inordinate love of self, which causes us to consider ourselves, explicitly or implicitly, as our first beginning and last end. It is a species of idolatry."
- Both point to the same structure: a good God gave (a gift) quietly reclassified as something we generated ourselves (an achievement)

Daughter Vices

Aquinas places pride above the seven as the "queen and mother of all vices," and counts vainglory as the capital sin in its place. The seven daughters below belong to vainglory (Summa II-II, Q. 132, a. 5). Aquinas sorts them by how we try to show off our excellence: directly, indirectly, or by refusing to yield it to anyone.

- **Boasting:** Displaying our excellence directly in words: talking ourselves up, steering conversation toward our accomplishments.
- **Love of novelties (presumption of novelties):** Displaying our excellence directly in deeds: doing new, unusual, or showy things precisely because they draw admiration.
- **Hypocrisy:** Displaying excellence indirectly: feigning a goodness we don't actually have so as to be esteemed for it.
- **Obstinacy:** Refusing to yield in the intellect: clinging to our opinion because it is ours, unwilling to grant that anyone else sees more clearly.
- **Discord:** Refusing to yield in the will: unwilling to give up our own preference for the sake of agreement and peace with others.
- **Contention:** Refusing to yield in speech: arguing noisily, needing to win the exchange.
- **Disobedience:** Refusing to yield in action: unwilling to carry out a legitimate superior's command, because submitting feels like a loss of standing.

In the Readings

- The second son's "Yes, sir" with no intention of going is hypocrisy in its purest form: the appearance of obedience without the substance.

- The priests and elders show obstinacy: even after seeing tax collectors repent, "you did not later change your minds."
- Tanquerey adds his own treatment of pride's offspring: presumption (attempting what's beyond our strength), ambition (inordinate love of honors and authority), and vanity (inordinate love of others' esteem), which in turn breeds boasting, ostentation, and hypocrisy.

Effects

> *"God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." (James 4:6, cited by Tanquerey)*

- Tanquerey: pride deprives us of grace (God withholds it from the proud) and of merit (purity of intention is corrupted when we act to be seen, cf. Matthew 6:1-2); it produces both personal faults (presumption leading to falls, discouragement) and faults against others (harshness, refusal to yield, discord); and finally it is "a source of unhappiness to those habitually given to it"; since we can never fully vanquish every rival, we "know no rest"

Remedies

- Philippians 2's kenosis: "he emptied himself… becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"; not thinking less of yourself, thinking of yourself less
- Tanquerey's classical remedy is a meditation in three steps: acknowledging that whatever we have is gift ("what hast thou that thou hast not received?", 1 Corinthians 4:7), that we can do nothing of ourselves without grace, and that as sinners we are due humility rather than acclaim, strong medicine, meant to free us, not to make us despise ourselves
- The Litany of Humility (Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val): asks deliverance from the desire to be esteemed, praised, preferred, then asks the grace to want others preferred instead

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Humility is the truth: all that we have comes from God (The Way 599-600; Forge 588); Aquinas's definition of pride, turned inside out.
- Pride makes us complicated and inhibits cheerfulness and active charity (Christ is Passing By 18, 77). Simplicity is humility's positive face, Nathanael, "in whom there is no guile" (Jn 1:47).
- Beware false humility (The Way 603; Furrow 262); running ourselves down is often pride in disguise.
- Practical means: ask insistently for self-knowledge; take every occasion to admit we have feet of clay (Friends of God 95); rectify promptly when we react with pride; serve others and forget ourselves; don't be the center of attention in conversation. Christ washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:4-5) is the icon.

Taking It Home

- The son who said "no" and went isn't a hero for being naturally humble: he's a hero because he stopped protecting his pride long enough to change his mind
- Series callback: anger, envy, pride, one wound underneath all three: a self too anxious about its own standing to let God's mercy be generous with someone else

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.

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Pride itself

- [ ] Have I taken credit for gifts that God gave me?
- [ ] Have I lived as though I do not need God, praying little or not at all?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I knowingly rejected a truth of the faith that I know the Church teaches? (CCC 2089)
- [ ] Have I looked down on others as less intelligent, less holy or less worthy than I am?
- [ ] Have I refused to admit I was wrong?
- [ ] Have I been unable to accept correction, advice or help?

Pride's companions: presumption, ambition, vanity

- [ ] Have I attempted things beyond my strength, relying on myself instead of God?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I presumed on God's mercy, sinning gravely while planning to confess later? (CCC 2092)
- [ ] Have I chased honors, titles or control for their own sake?
- [ ] Do I live for the esteem of others, worrying constantly about what people think of me?

Boasting and love of novelties

- [ ] Do I talk myself up or steer conversations toward my accomplishments?
- [ ] Have I done unusual or showy things mainly to be noticed?

Hypocrisy: seeming without being

- [ ] Have I pretended to be more devout, generous or virtuous than I really am?
- [ ] Have I said "yes" to God or others with no intention of following through, like the second son?

Obstinacy, discord and contention: refusing to yield

- [ ] Have I clung to my opinion simply because it is mine?
- [ ] Have I refused to give up my preference for the sake of peace?
- [ ] Do I need to win every argument and have the last word?

Disobedience

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I refused to obey legitimate authority (parents, Church, lawful superiors) in serious matters?
- [ ] Have I resisted direction mainly because submitting felt like losing face?

False humility: pride turned inward

- [ ] Do I run myself down so that others will reassure me?
- [ ] Have I refused to use my gifts out of fear of failing or looking foolish?

What pride has done

- [ ] Has pride made me harsh, impatient or unforgiving with others?
- [ ] Has it led me into presumption, then falls, then discouragement?
- [ ] Has pride kept me from Confession, from asking forgiveness, or from asking for help?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I regularly thank God, remembering that all I have is gift ("What do you have that you did not receive?" 1 Corinthians 4:7)?
- [ ] Have I said "I was wrong" this week, without excuses?
- [ ] Do I let others have the credit, the last word or the better seat?
- [ ] Do I ask God insistently for self-knowledge?
- [ ] Do I pray the Litany of Humility, or another prayer for humility?
- [ ] Do I look for small ways to serve, especially when no one will notice?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I insist on my way in our marriage?
- [ ] Do I find it hard to apologize to my spouse?

Parents

- [ ] Do I refuse to admit mistakes to my children?
- [ ] Do I treat my children's achievements as trophies for myself?

Single adults

- [ ] Have I made independence into a wall, refusing to let anyone close?

Young people

- [ ] Do I act like I know better than my parents and teachers about everything?
- [ ] Do I care more about my image than about being honest?

At work

- [ ] Do I take credit for team work, or hide my mistakes?
- [ ] Do I treat people below me with less respect?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Is my pride armor over an old shame or rejection?
- [ ] Do I believe I have to earn my worth, or that I can never look weak?
- [ ] Have I vowed never to need anyone?
- [ ] Can I receive that the Father said “You are my beloved Son” (Mark 1:11) before Jesus had done anything, and that my worth, too, is given before it is earned?

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 Son Who Changed His Mind

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 21:28-32

Take a quiet moment. Maybe it's early, before the house wakes up, or late at night after the last practice and the last load of laundry. Take a slow breath.

God is here with you. He has looked forward to this time with you even more than you have.

When you are ready, listen to the father's request: "Son, go out and work in the vineyard today." Hear the first son answer, "I will not." Hear the second say, "Yes, sir," and then never go.

• • •

Which son are you more often? The one whose words are good but whose feet never move? The one who looks right on Sunday and lets the week slide? Or the one who says no, and then, slowly, changes his mind?

• • •

Think of a time recently when you were wrong and didn't want to admit it. An argument at home. A decision at work. A moment when you dug in because backing down felt like losing. Let the memory come without defending yourself.

Now picture the first son turning around in the road and walking back toward the vineyard. No speech, no excuse. He just goes. That is what conversion looks like: letting yourself be wrong.

• • •

Ask the Lord gently: "What am I protecting?" Often pride is armor over something tender: a fear of not measuring up, an old shame, the belief that you have to earn your worth. Let Him show you.

• • •

Now hear what the Father said over Jesus at His baptism, before He had preached a sermon or worked a miracle: "You are my beloved Son." Hear it said to you. Your worth was given before you did anything. You don't have to win every argument to be loved.

Pray these lines from the Litany of Humility slowly, one at a time: "From the desire of being esteemed, deliver me, Jesus. From the fear of being humiliated, deliver me, Jesus. That others may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it."

Before you get up, decide on one person you will say "I was wrong" to this week. Then let it go into His hands.

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

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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.

• • •

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."

• • •

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?

• • •

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."

Gluttony

Isaiah 25:6-10a (the Lord's Feast) · Psalm 23 · Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20 · Matthew 22:1-14 (the Wedding Feast)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: A Feast, Rightly Received

> "A *feast of rich food and choice wines.*" (*Isaiah 25:6*)

- Isaiah's messianic banquet and Psalm 23's overflowing cup are pure gift: there's nothing shameful about the table itself

Nature

> "*Gluttony consists properly in an immoderate pleasure in eating and drinking.*" (*Aquinas, Summa II–II, Q. 148*)

- Tanquerey: gluttony is "the abuse of that legitimate pleasure God has attached to eating and drinking"; sinful when pursued as an end in itself ("whose God is their belly," Phil 3:19), or to excess.
- Tanquerey names four ways it happens: eating with no real need, seeking out delicacies for their own sake, exceeding appetite or need, and eating with animal-like avidity

The Five Daughters of Gluttony

St. Thomas Aquinas taught that when we overindulge in food and drink, the damage doesn't stop at our stomachs. It spreads to our minds, our feelings, our words, our actions, and our bodies. He called these effects the "daughters" of gluttony.

- **A foggy mind:** Think of how sluggish you feel after a huge holiday dinner. Too much dulls our thinking. Aquinas says the opposite is also true: self-control actually sharpens the mind and opens us to wisdom.
- **Silly, out-of-control giddiness:** Aquinas paints a picture of a ship whose captain has fallen asleep at the wheel. When reason dozes off, our emotions take over, and we get carried away in a kind of reckless, empty fun.
- **Talking too much:** We've all been at a long, indulgent meal where the conversation runs on and on, and things get said that shouldn't be. Overindulgence loosens the tongue.
- **Foolish behavior:** Crude jokes, clowning around, acting in ways we'd be embarrassed by the next morning. We forget who we are and how we're called to carry ourselves.
- **A body out of order:** Excess makes the body itself rebel, as anyone who has been sick after too much food or drink knows. It also weakens our self-control in other areas and makes us more vulnerable to sins of impurity.

In the Readings

- Fr. Janvier's description (quoted by Tanquerey) of the sumptuous feast where secrets are betrayed and reputations shredded is loquaciousness and scurrility in action.

- Paul's contentment "whether well fed or going hungry" is the clear-headedness that dullness of mind loses.
- Gluttony isn't only food: distraction, screens, anything consumed compulsively past the point of nourishment.

Effects

- Tanquerey: gluttony "makes the soul a slave to the body," brutalizes, weakens intellectual and moral life, and "insensibly paves the way to voluptuous pleasure, which at bottom is one in kind with it"

> *Fr. Janvier, quoted by Tanquerey: excess at table breeds "intemperance in speech" (betrayed secrets, back-biting, calumny, "faults against justice and against charity.")*

Remedies

- Tanquerey's guiding principle: pleasure is a means, not an end, so it must answer to right reason, practically, this means purity of intention (eating "to the glory of God," 1 Cor 10:31), ordinary sobriety (leaving the table without being fully satiated), and small habitual mortifications (forgoing a relished-but-unnecessary food; setting aside a portion for the poor)
- On alcohol specifically: moderate use isn't sinful in itself, but abstinence for the sake of good example, or total abstinence where a real predisposition to excess exists, is both praiseworthy and prudent
- Paul's contentment (Phil 4:12) names the deeper remedy, indifference to the amount, not asceticism for its own sake: "I have learned the secret of being well fed and going hungry"

The Wound Beneath the Sin

- Compulsive eating, drinking, or scrolling is very often self-soothing. It medicates loneliness, anxiety, or shame. the craving is real but misdirected: a legitimate need met in an illegitimate way. Food cannot reach a wound of the heart.
- Isaiah 25 holds both together. The same Lord who spreads the feast "will wipe away the tears from every face" (Is 25:8). The banquet God gives both feeds and heals.
- A simple question to carry: "What am I actually hungry for?"

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Temperance moderates our appetite for sensible goods, which are gifts from God: "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7); the same verse that anchors humility. Gratitude is the hinge.
- Mortification as "prayer of the senses" (Furrow 980-981); small, cheerful, discreet, constant; keeping the Church's few prescribed fasts generously and with an affirmative spirit.
- Sobriety in food and drink (The Way 38, 205, 367, 679-682).
- Joy is not the physiological happiness "of a healthy animal" (The Way 659) but prayerful union with God, the joy/pleasure distinction in St. Josemaría's words.
- The Wedding Feast points to the true banquet: the Eucharist, the feast gluttony counterfeits. Right dispositions for receiving it, and spiritual communions through the day (The Way 540).

Taking It Home

- Gratitude for the feast, not need of the feast: that's the whole distinction
- The table is a gift either way; gluttony is what happens when we forget that and start needing it instead

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

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Gluttony itself

- ☐ Do I eat or drink mainly for pleasure, past what I need?
- ☐ Have I regularly eaten or drunk past the point of enough?
- ☐ Do I make food and drink the center of my day, or my main source of comfort?
- ☐ St. Gregory's five ways: have I eaten too soon (grazing all day), too expensively, too much, too eagerly, or too fussily?

Alcohol and drugs

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I gotten drunk? (CCC 2290)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I driven after drinking, or otherwise endangered my own or others' safety? (CCC 2290)
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I used illegal drugs, or misused prescription drugs? (CCC 2291)
- ☐ Have I encouraged others to drink too much?

A foggy mind (dullness)

- ☐ Has excess left me sluggish, unable to pray, think clearly or do my work well?

Giddiness, too much talk, foolish behavior

- ☐ Has overindulgence led me into silly, out-of-control behavior?
- ☐ Have I said things over food or drinks that I should not have: gossip, secrets, cutting remarks?
- ☐ Have I told crude jokes or acted in ways I was embarrassed by the next morning?

A body out of order (uncleanness)

- ☐ Has excess in food or drink weakened my self-control in other areas, including purity?
- ☐ Have I neglected my health through overeating, drinking or lack of care?

Beyond food and drink

- ☐ Do I consume screens, news, shopping or entertainment compulsively, past the point of nourishment?

- [ ] Is there something I reach for without thinking many times a day?

The Church's fasts

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I neglected the fast and abstinence of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday without a serious reason? (CCC 2043)
- [ ] Have I eaten meat on the Fridays of Lent without a serious reason?
- [ ] Do I keep the other Fridays of the year as days of penance, by abstaining from meat or by another act of penance?
- [ ] Do I keep the one-hour fast before Holy Communion?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I say grace before meals, at home and in public?
- [ ] Do I leave the table not quite full?
- [ ] Do I offer small, cheerful mortifications: skipping a second helping, a dessert, a snack?
- [ ] Have I set aside a portion for the poor?
- [ ] Have I considered abstaining from alcohol for the sake of example, or entirely if I have a tendency to excess?
- [ ] Do I make spiritual communions during the day?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do my habits with food or alcohol burden my spouse?

Parents

- [ ] Am I teaching my children gratitude and moderation at the table?
- [ ] Do my children see me drinking too much?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I eat or drink alone in ways I would not want anyone to see?

Young people

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I used drugs, or misused someone's prescription?
- [ ] Have I drunk alcohol underage or vaped?
- [ ] Do I eat or scroll mindlessly to escape stress or boredom?

At work

- [ ] Have I drunk too much at work events or business dinners?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Do I eat, drink or scroll to soothe loneliness, anxiety, boredom or shame?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that no one is going to comfort me?
- [ ] Have I told myself, “I deserve this; nobody else is giving me anything”?
- [ ] Can I bring the real hunger to Jesus, who says, “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)?
- [ ] If food or alcohol has a hold on me that I cannot break alone, am I willing to seek help? (That is not a failure of willpower or virtue.)

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: What Am I Hungry For?

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 22:1-14

Find a quiet moment. Maybe you're reading this at the kitchen counter, the dishes still in the sink. Take a slow breath and let the noise of the day fall away.

The Lord is here with you, right there in your kitchen. He is in no hurry, and He is glad you stopped.

When you are ready, picture the king's wedding feast. The tables are set. The food is ready. The doors are open. The king sends his servants out: "Come to the feast." And the invited guests make excuses. One goes to his farm, another to his business. They're not doing anything wicked. They're just busy.

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Now picture a different scene, one you know. It's nine o'clock at night. The kids are finally in bed. The house is quiet. You find yourself standing at the open refrigerator, or reaching for another glass, or scrolling on your phone. You aren't really hungry. Stay with that picture for a moment.

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Ask yourself, gently: "What am I actually hungry for?" Is it rest? Company? Comfort after a hard day? Relief from worry? Let the real answer come. Don't judge it. Just notice it.

• • •

Now bring that hunger to the Lord. Say it plainly: "Lord, I'm lonely." "Lord, I'm worn out." "Lord, I'm anxious." This is what the craving was really asking for all along. Food cannot reach a wound of the heart. He can.

Hear the Psalm from this Sunday: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. You spread the table before me… my cup overflows." He is the one throwing the feast. He is the one who comforts.

• • •

Think of the next Mass you'll attend. Picture the priest holding up the Host: "Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb." This is Isaiah's feast on the mountain, arrived. It's the one table where you cannot have too much.

Before you get up, make a small resolution: tonight, before you reach for something, you will pause for ten seconds, name what you feel, and tell Jesus. Then decide. Close with a simple grace: "Thank You, Lord, for every good gift. Fill what only You can fill."

Sloth

Wisdom 6:12-16 · Psalm 63 · 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 · Matthew 25:1-13 (Wise and Foolish Virgins)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: Ten Lamps, Waiting

- Ten bridesmaids wait for a delayed bridegroom; five bring extra oil, five don't, and the five without it miss the feast entirely
- Nobody in this parable does anything wicked. That is exactly how sloth operates.

Nature

> *"Sloth is a sluggishness of the mind which neglects to begin good."* (Aquinas, Summa II-II, Q. 35)

- Tanquerey: sloth is "an inclination to idleness or at least to aimlessness, to apathy in action"; "a disease of the will, which fears effort and recoils from it."
- Tanquerey gives degrees: the indolent (does the task reluctantly and badly), the sluggard (delays and postpones indefinitely), and the truly lazy (a settled aversion to all real work); when it targets spiritual exercises specifically, he calls it spiritual sloth, "the foster-parent of lukewarmness"

Daughter Vices

Aquinas (Summa II-II, Q. 35, a. 4) derives sloth's daughters from the ways we flee from, or fight against, spiritual goods that feel burdensome.

- **Despair:** Fleeing the end itself: giving up on the hope of attaining God at all.
- **Faint-heartedness (pusillanimity):** Fleeing the arduous means: shrinking from the demanding goods we're invited to, the counsels, the "more", as simply too much for us.
- **Sluggishness regarding the commandments:** Fleeing even the ordinary means: torpor about what is plainly required.
- **Spite (rancor):** Fighting against the people who draw us toward spiritual goods: resentment of those whose goodness or encouragement reminds us of what we're avoiding.
- **Malice:** Fighting against the spiritual goods themselves: coming to detest the things of God precisely because they make demands.
- **Wandering of the mind toward unlawful things:** Flight into distraction: the soul that won't rest in God goes looking for pleasure elsewhere. Following Isidore, Aquinas names its forms, restlessness of mind, curiosity, loquacity, bodily restlessness, and instability.

In the Readings

- The foolish virgins embody sluggishness regarding the commandments: not refusal, just not bothering to prepare.
- Wandering of the mind is sloth's other face: when the harder good goes unattended, attention doesn't go blank, it goes somewhere easier.

- Modern acedia: curiosity and restlessness are the endless scroll, described seven centuries early.

Effects

> *"I passed by the field of the slothful man... and behold it was filled with nettles." (Proverbs 24:30–31, cited by Tanquerey)*

- Tanquerey: an idle mind and heart don't stay empty, they fill instead with "sensual, ambitious, proud, egotistical" thoughts; he even links Sodom's downfall in part to "fullness of bread and abundance and the idleness" (Ezekiel 16:49)
- The barren fig tree (Luke 13, Matthew 3:10) is his image for the stakes: a tree is judged not for doing evil, but for bearing no fruit at all

Remedies

- Tanquerey's first remedy is conviction: work, including the work of the interior life, is not optional for anyone, rich or poor, because we are each "laborers sent by God to work in His vineyard" (cf. Matthew 20:6-7, the same vineyard image running through this whole series)
- Practically: sustained, deliberate effort in training the will, since the slothful person instinctively shrinks from exactly the effort that would help
- From the habit-formation notes: since habits grow by repeated action and fade by the falling-off of it, the remedy for sloth is never a single burst of energy, it's one small, recommitted practice, repeated

The Wound Beneath the Sin

- Spiritual sloth and its daughter despair often grow from the wounds of hopelessness and powerlessness. The lie is "Nothing will ever change, so why try?" What looks like laziness from outside can be discouragement from inside.
- The truth to set against it: "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts" (Rom 5:5). Hope is healed first; effort follows.

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- Lukewarmness is spiritual sloth in its settled form (Tanquerey calls sloth its "foster-parent"). The signs of tepidity read like an examination of conscience: comfort-seeking, omitting the examen, not struggling on resolutions, rushing vocal prayers, placing conditions on our response (Forge 930; The Way 331).
- The Gospel's sleeping disciples: Peter asleep, then following "at a distance" (Lk 22:54); the enemy sowing weeds "while men were sleeping" (Mt 13:25). The sleeping bridesmaids belong in this company.
- The remedy is waking up: "it is full time now for you to wake from sleep" (Rom 13:11), and returning to the fervor of your first conversion (Rev 2:4-5).
- St. Augustine: "Totum exigit te, qui fecit te"; the One who made you asks for all of you.
- Using time well: "making the most of the time" (Eph 5:15-16); the heroic minute (The Way 251); diligence, not rushing (Forge 708).
- Prayer's usual impediments, aridity, lack of time, distraction, are sloth's cover stories. Fight them actively and use them as matter for prayer (The Way 90-92; Furrow 448).

Taking It Home

- The five who ran out of oil weren't punished for malice: they were locked out for not being ready

- The invitation is real and it’s coming; the only sin available here is not showing up prepared to meet it

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.

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Sloth itself

- [ ] Do I feel a heaviness or sadness toward the things of God: prayer, Mass, Scripture?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately refused the joy of God's love, turning away from Him in disgust or indifference? (CCC 2094)
- [ ] Have I put off prayer until "later," and later never came?
- [ ] Do I keep busy so that I never have to be quiet with God?

Despair and faint-heartedness

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I given up hope of God's mercy or of my salvation? (CCC 2091)
- [ ] Have I decided that holiness, or the "more" God asks, is simply not for me?

Sluggishness about the commandments

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I missed Sunday Mass without a serious reason? (CCC 2181)
- [ ] Have I neglected the ordinary duties of my state in life: work, family, home?
- [ ] Have I gone a long time without Confession because I could not be bothered?

Spite and malice

- [ ] Have I resented people whose goodness reminds me of what I am avoiding?
- [ ] Have I mocked devout people or the practices of the faith?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I come to hate God or the things of God? (CCC 2094)

A wandering mind

- [ ] Do I reach for my phone when I meant to pray or read Scripture?
- [ ] Do I fill silence with noise: news, scrolling, chatter?
- [ ] Am I restless and unstable, starting things and never finishing them?
- [ ] Do I let my mind wander at Mass or in prayer on purpose?

Lukewarmness: the settled form of sloth

- [ ] Do I seek my own comfort first?
- [ ] Have I stopped making an examination of conscience?
- [ ] Have I stopped struggling with my resolutions?
- [ ] Do I rush through my prayers, or skip them when I don't feel like it?
- [ ] Do I put conditions on what I will give God?

What sloth has done

- [ ] Has my neglect left my soul "overgrown with thorns" (Proverbs 24:31)?
- [ ] Has an idle heart filled up with other temptations?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I keep a set time for prayer each day, even when I feel nothing?
- [ ] Do I practice the "heroic minute," getting up on time without negotiating (The Way 251)?
- [ ] Have I done the thing I have been putting off: the Confession, the call, the visit?
- [ ] Do I offer God my dryness itself in prayer ("My soul is thirsting for you," Psalm 63)?
- [ ] Do I use my time well, as a steward (Ephesians 5:16)?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I leave the spiritual life of our home to my spouse?
- [ ] Do we pray together?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I drift through evenings and weekends with no plan for God or others?

At work

- [ ] Do I do my work diligently and well, or only the minimum?
- [ ] Have I wasted paid working time?

Parents

- [ ] Do I make the effort to pass on the faith, or leave it to the parish school or religious education?
- [ ] Do I let screens babysit my children?

Young people

- [ ] Do I put off homework, chores and prayer until the last minute or never?
- [ ] Do I spend hours gaming or scrolling?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Is my apparent laziness really discouragement: years of trying and falling, or prayers that seemed unanswered?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that nothing will ever change, so why try?
- [ ] Have I vowed not to get my hopes up again?
- [ ] Can I trust that “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts” (Romans 5:5)?

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: Oil for the Lamp

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 25:1-13

Find a quiet place, maybe at the end of a long day, and take a slow breath.

The Lord is here with you. Even if you feel nothing at all, He has not gone anywhere.

When you are ready, light a candle if you can, and watch the flame for a moment.

Then picture ten young women waiting for a bridegroom at night, lamps in their hands. He's late. One by one, they get drowsy. All ten fall asleep, the wise ones too. Then at midnight, a cry: "Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!"

• • •

Five of them have oil. Five don't. "Give us some of your oil." "No, for there may not be enough for us and you." Some things can't be borrowed at the last minute. A friendship with God is built over time, and no one can lend it to you at midnight.

• • •

Now picture a Sunday night in your own house. You meant to pray every day this week. Your Bible is on the nightstand under the phone charger. You pick up the phone instead. Or there's the Confession you've meant to make since Easter. You're not against God. You just feel heavy. Stay with that heaviness for a moment.

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Ask the Lord gently: "Why have I stopped?" Often it isn't that we don't care. It's that we stopped believing it could be different. Years of trying and falling. Prayers that seemed unanswered. A faith that went dry. Tell Him which it is for you.

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Now pray this Sunday's Psalm with your own dryness: "O God, you are my God whom I seek; for you my flesh pines and my soul thirsts like the earth, parched, lifeless and without water." Say it slowly. Tell Him exactly how dry it is. That prayer counts.

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Hear St. Paul: "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts." Hope is healed first. Effort follows.

Before you blow out the candle, choose one small thing for this week. Ten minutes of prayer at the same time each day. The Confession you've put off. The phone call you've been avoiding. Say it to Him. Then rest. The Bridegroom is coming, and He wants you there.

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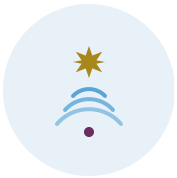
Hear the master's words to the faithful servants, spoken to you: "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Come, share your master's joy." He isn't waiting to audit you. He wants to share His joy.

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.

Sins That Cry to Heaven

Sins against the neighbor

Exodus 22:20-26 · Psalm 18 · 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 · Matthew 22:34-40 (the Greatest Commandment)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: The Two Tablets

> *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart... You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Matthew 22:37, 39)

- The first chapter looked at sin as turning away from God. This chapter turns to the other tablet: what sin does to the people around us
- Exodus 22 is one of the texts behind a strong old phrase in the Catechism: sins that "cry to heaven" (CCC 1867)

> *"If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry."* (Exodus 22:22)

Nature

- All sin is first against God, but many sins wound the neighbor directly: above all those who can least defend themselves
- The Church speaks of social sin in three senses (John Paul II, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia 16): every sin affects society; some sins attack social life directly; and some unjust situations and structures make sin easier
- Even so, moral responsibility always rests finally on persons. "Society did it" is never the whole explanation, but neither is "I personally didn't do anything" a full defense

Kinds: The Sins That Cry to Heaven

CCC 1867 lists the sins the tradition says rise before God on their own, because their victims have no other advocate.

- **The blood of Abel:** Willful murder of the innocent. "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10).
- **The sin of the Sodomites:** The outcry against Sodom (Genesis 18:20; 19:13). Ezekiel 16:49, which Tanquerey cites under sloth, adds a detail worth noting: pride, excess of food, complacent ease, and not helping the poor and needy.
- **The cry of the people oppressed in Egypt:** The oppression of a people held in bondage. "I have heard their cry... I know well what they are suffering" (Exodus 3:7).
- **The cry of the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan:** Exploiting those with no protector: this Sunday's first reading, almost word for word (Exodus 22:20-22).
- **Injustice to the wage earner:** Withholding a worker's just pay. "The wages you withheld... are crying aloud" (James 5:4; cf. Deuteronomy 24:14-15).

In the Readings

- Exodus 22 names three of them directly: the alien, the widow and orphan, and, through the ban on interest and on keeping a poor man's cloak overnight, the exploitation of the poor that avarice breeds (see the chapter on greed)
- Tie-back to greed: "insensibility to mercy," avarice's first daughter, is the interior root of every sin on this list

Effects

- God takes the side of the victim: "My wrath will flare up" (Exodus 22:23). These sins are grave precisely because they strike the defenseless
- They corrode communities, not just souls: mistrust, division, and the normalizing of injustice
- They also blind the one who commits them: the habit of not seeing the poor becomes, over time, an inability to see them

Remedies

- The Greatest Commandment is the remedy stated whole: love of neighbor rooted in love of God. Neither half survives long without the other
- The corporal and spiritual works of mercy as concrete, habit-forming acts: since virtue grows by repeated action
- Justice in the ordinary places: paying people fairly and promptly, honest dealing, noticing who in the parish is a widow, an orphan, or a stranger
- Examination of conscience that includes omissions: not only "whom did I harm?" but "whose cry did I not answer?"

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 Jn 3:18); charity shown through concrete details of service.
- The order and universality of charity (Friends of God 226-231; Furrow 825), and refusing collective egoism as a family, clique, or nation (Furrow 303, 315).
- Catholics may not abstain from public life; we have a duty to help solve the community's problems (Furrow 303, 310-311; Gaudium et Spes 42-43, 75). Structures of sin are answered partly by Christians present where decisions get made.
- No split between faith and daily life (Gaudium et Spes 43): exemplary citizens who fulfill their duties and exercise their rights (Furrow 300).
- Work as service (Friends of God 55-72): the wage-earner's cry is answered by employers and workers who sanctify their work through justice.

Taking It Home

- The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"; the first chapter's point and this one's, joined together
- The cry of the poor reaches God either way. The only question is whether it reaches us first

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

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This chapter's examination looks at sins against the neighbor, especially those who can't defend themselves, and at the good we leave undone.

The blood of Abel: innocent life

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I taken part in, encouraged or paid for an abortion? (CCC 2272) God's mercy is greater than any sin; the priest will help.
- ☐ Have I treated the lives of the unborn, the disabled, the sick or the elderly as less valuable?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I harbored a deliberate desire to see someone dead or gravely harmed? (CCC 2302)

Sodom: pride, plenty and ease

- ☐ Like Sodom in Ezekiel 16:49, have I lived in pride, plenty and complacent ease while not helping the poor and needy?
- ☐ Has comfort made me deaf to the needs around me?

The oppressed: freedom and dignity

- ☐ Have I treated anyone with contempt because of race, nationality, poverty or background?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I exploited or abused someone under my power? (CCC 2414)
- ☐ Have I supported, by silence or by spending, things that oppress others?

The stranger, the widow, the orphan

- ☐ Have I spoken about immigrants or the poor with contempt?
- ☐ Have I taken advantage of someone in a weak position: elderly, grieving, sick or alone?
- ☐ Do I know the names of the widowed, lonely or newcomers in my parish and neighborhood?

The worker's wage

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I withheld just pay from those who work for me, or paid late without reason? (CCC 2434)
- ☐ Have I treated workers (contractors, servers, cleaners, sitters) with respect and fairness?

Social sin: the part I play

- [ ] Have I told myself "society did it" to excuse my own part in an injustice?
- [ ] Have I fulfilled my duties as a citizen, voting with a well-formed conscience and caring for the common good?

Sins of omission: whose cry did I not answer?

- [ ] Have I looked away from people in need because I could not fix everything?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I refused to help someone in serious need when I could have? (CCC 2447; Matthew 25:45)
- [ ] Whose cry have I heard this month and not answered?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I practice at least one work of mercy every week?
- [ ] Do I give generously to the poor, and support the Church's works of charity?
- [ ] Have I learned the name of someone I usually walk past without a word?
- [ ] Do I examine myself each night on omissions, not only on what I did?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do we, as a couple, share what we have with people in need?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I use my freedom and time to serve those in need?

At work

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Are my business practices just to workers, customers and suppliers? (CCC 2409, 2434)
- [ ] Do I treat the lowest-paid people at work with the same respect as the highest?

Parents

- [ ] Am I teaching my children to notice and serve the poor?

Young people

- [ ] Do I include the kid who sits alone, or join in when others are mocked?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Do I avoid seeing the poor because I feel powerless before the size of the need?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that my small act does not matter?
- [ ] Have I vowed to keep my distance so I will not be overwhelmed?
- [ ] Can I remember my own poverty before God ("You were once aliens yourselves," Exodus 22:20), and let Him be my strength (Psalm 18)?

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 Face at the Intersection

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 22:34-40

Find a few quiet minutes and take a slow breath.

God is near you now, and He is your strength. You can pray the words of this Sunday's Psalm with confidence: "I love you, Lord, my strength."

When you are ready, hear the scholar of the law ask Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" And hear Jesus answer with two that can't be pulled apart: love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

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Now picture a place you pass every week. An intersection on your way into Nashville. A man stands at the corner with a cardboard sign. You look straight ahead. When the light turns green, you feel relief. Stay in that moment. What was going on in you?

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Most of us don't oppress anyone. Our sin against the poor is usually not seeing. And often what's underneath is a feeling of powerlessness: the need is so big, I can't fix it, so I look away. Tell the Lord honestly where you feel that.

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Hear God speak in this Sunday's first reading: "You shall not oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt." Remember your own poverty before God. There was a time you were the one standing at the light, spiritually, and He stopped for you. Sit with that memory.

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Now let a face come to mind. Not "the poor" in general. One person. A widow at church who sits alone. A neighbor whose name you never learned. A new family at your child's school. A coworker carrying something heavy. Hold that face before God.

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You can't answer every cry. But you can answer the one in front of you. Ask Him: "Lord, what is the one thing You want me to do for this person this week?" Wait for an answer. It might be small: a name learned, a meal dropped off, a phone call.

Close by praying from this Sunday's Psalm: "I love you, O Lord, my strength, O Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer." Then add: "Be my strength, Lord, so I can stop for the one in front of me."

All Saints

Conversion and the call to holiness

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 · Psalm 24:1-6 · 1 John 3:1-3 · Matthew 5:1-12a (the Beatitudes)



I The Teaching

All Saints replaces the 31st Sunday this year. It is the hinge of the series: we have named what sin is and where it comes from; here is where it leads when grace wins.

In the Readings: A Crowd No One Could Count

- John sees a multitude from every nation, robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb
- Every one of them was a sinner. The saints are not people who had no capital sins; they are people whose sins did not have the last word

> *"Who may go up the mountain of the Lord?... The clean of hand and pure of heart."* (Psalm 24:3-4)

Nature

- Conversion (metanoia) is a radical reorientation of the whole life toward God: returning to Him with the whole heart, in hope of His mercy and trust in His grace (CCC 1431)
- It is not a one-time event at the start of the Christian life but a lifelong movement: the passage from vice to virtue is real but not immediate
- Tanquerey: perfection "consists essentially in union with God through love," and since God is holiness itself, we cannot be united to Him unless we are clean of heart, the psalm's language exactly
- Holiness is not reserved for a few. The universal call to holiness (Lumen Gentium, ch. 5) means everyone in the pews is being invited into that crowd

Stages: Tanquerey's Three Ways

Tanquerey organizes the whole spiritual life into three stages. The capital sins belong especially to the first, but it helps to see the whole road.

- **The purgative way:** The way of beginners: purifying the soul of sin and its roots in view of union with God, atoning for the past and detaching from sin and its occasions. The struggle against the capital sins is the center of this stage.
- **The illuminative way:** The way of those advancing: with serious sin largely overcome, the soul grows positively in the virtues, imitating Christ more closely.
- **The unitive way:** The way of the mature: a simple, habitual union with God in love, where virtue has become second nature and prayer becomes restful.

In the Readings: The Beatitudes as the Capital Sins Reversed

The tradition has long read the Beatitudes as a portrait of the soul healed of the capital sins. Here is the pairing:

- **Poor in spirit:** The cure of pride and avarice: owning nothing as one's own, before God or anyone.
- **The meek:** The cure of anger: strength governed by reason and charity.

- **Those who mourn:** Godly sorrow for sin, the opposite of sloth's worldly sorrow at spiritual good.
- **Hunger and thirst for righteousness:** The appetite of gluttony redirected toward the only food that satisfies.
- **The merciful:** The cure of envy: rejoicing in and serving another's good instead of grieving at it.
- **The clean of heart:** The cure of lust: the clear sight lust's "blindness of mind" destroys: "they will see God."
- **The peacemakers:** The undoing of pride's daughters: discord and contention.

Effects: The Fruit of Conversion

- Freedom for excellence: good acts become easier, more joyful, more fully one's own, like a musician who no longer has to think about the scales
- Joy rather than pleasure: "the happy life is joy born of the truth" (Augustine); the Beatitudes literally promise blessedness, not ease
- 1 John: "Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure"; hope is not passive; it purifies

Remedies: Tanquerey's Means of Sanctification

- Prayer: the first and chief means, since grace is what makes any of this possible
- Penance, Confession above all, "after prayer, the most effective means" for cleansing past faults and guarding against future ones
- Mortification: small, deliberate renunciations whose "chief purpose is to safeguard us against sin… by weakening in us the love of pleasure"
- The particular examen: attacking one's predominant fault, one capital sin at a time, rather than everything at once
- The Eucharist and the example of the saints: the Church proposes the saints, Tanquerey notes, precisely to provoke "a high and hallowed emulation"

Conversion as Healing

- Conversion is not only turning from sin but being healed: "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Ps 147:3). "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted" names grief brought to God rather than buried.
- The saints are not people without wounds, but people whose wounds were brought into Christ's and became places of grace.
- John Paul II on the destiny of the saints: the resurrection of the body and a communion of persons brought to fulfillment (TOB 64-72, on Mt 22:30). Holiness is not escape from the body but its redemption (Rom 8:23).

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thes 4:3). There is no "second-rate holiness": sanctity is the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity (Lumen Gentium 40; Forge 556).
- Holiness is within everyone's grasp, in the middle of daily circumstances (Friends of God 4; Christifideles Laici 17); the saints of ordinary life and little things (Friends of God 7-9).
- Hope: 1 John 3:2-3, this Sunday's second reading, is the recollection material's key text for hope: everyone who hopes in him "purifies himself as he is pure." Since God chose us (Eph 1:4), He will give us the means (Friends of God 213).

- Beginning again: holiness depends on always getting up again after a fall rather than on never sinning. The crowd in Revelation washed their robes; they did not arrive spotless.
- The Communion of Saints: sanctity reaches us through the Mystical Body, and our work, prayer, and sacrifice help all souls (Forge 846, 925, 982).
- A plan of life as the practical framework: specific norms of piety kept with constancy (Friends of God 149-151).

Taking It Home

- “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed” (every saint in that crowd once stood exactly where we stand)
- Pick one capital sin from the series, your own predominant one, and one Beatitude to set against it this week.

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 chapter's examination uses the Beatitudes as a mirror, then the means of holiness on which the saints relied. Look for your predominant fault: the one that trips you most.

Blessed are the poor in spirit (against pride and greed)

- ☐ Do I treat my gifts and possessions as my own, or as God's?
- ☐ Do I depend on God, or on myself?

Blessed are they who mourn (against sloth)

- ☐ Am I sorry for my sins, or indifferent to them?
- ☐ Do I bring my grief to God, or bury it?

Blessed are the meek (against anger)

- ☐ Do I keep my temper under the rule of charity?
- ☐ Am I gentle with those who irritate me?

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness (against gluttony)

- ☐ Do I hunger for God as much as I hunger for comfort?
- ☐ Do I care about justice for others?

Blessed are the merciful (against envy)

- ☐ Do I show mercy to those who have wronged me?
- ☐ Do I rejoice in others' good?

Blessed are the clean of heart (against lust)

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I deliberately entertained impure thoughts, or looked at people as objects? (Matthew 5:28)
- ☐ Do I guard my eyes and my heart?

Blessed are the peacemakers (against discord and contention)

- ☐ Do I bring peace into my family, work and parish, or stir up conflict?

- [ ] Have I tried to reconcile people who are divided?

Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness

- [ ] Have I hidden my faith to avoid ridicule?
- [ ] Have I compromised what is right to be accepted?

The means of holiness

- [ ] Prayer: do I pray every day, even briefly?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Do I keep Sunday and holy days of obligation by attending Mass? (CCC 2181)
- [ ] Confession: do I go regularly, or only rarely?
- [ ] Mortification: do I offer small sacrifices out of love?
- [ ] Particular examen: do I know my predominant fault, and work on it?
- [ ] Do I have a plan of life: set times for prayer, Scripture and the sacraments?
- [ ] Do I read the lives of the saints, or ask their help?

Beginning again

- [ ] When I fall, do I get up quickly, or wallow in discouragement?
- [ ] Do I believe that holiness is for me, not only for a few?
- [ ] Do I pray for the faithful departed?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do I see my marriage as my path to holiness and my spouse's?

Parents

- [ ] Do I believe my children are called to be saints, and form them for it?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I see my present life as a real place to become holy, not a waiting room?

Young people

- [ ] Do I think holiness is for "other people," not for someone my age?

At work

- [ ] Do I offer my work to God and do it well, as a way to holiness?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Do I think my wounds disqualify me from holiness?
- [ ] Is there a grief I have never brought to God?
- [ ] Which saint's story gives me hope that grace can heal my particular wound?
- [ ] Can I hear Jesus say, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4)?

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: A Crowd No One Could Count

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 5:1-12a

Find a quiet place. Maybe it's the evening of All Saints Day, or the quiet after a Sunday dinner. Take a slow breath.

You are not praying alone. The Lord is here with you, and around you is "a great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1): the saints, who are praying for you.

When you are ready, picture the scene St. John saw: "a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people and tongue," dressed in white. Then hear the elder's answer about who they are: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." Washed, not born white.

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Look closely at the crowd. Somewhere in it is a grandmother who prayed her rosary every night. A soldier with a shattered leg. A young woman who loved too many things before she loved God. People who had tempers, who held grudges, who fought the same battles you fight. Every one of them was a sinner who, after every fall, got up again.

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Now hear Jesus on the mountain. Let the Beatitudes come one at a time, slowly. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are they who mourn." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness." "Blessed are the merciful." "Blessed are the clean of heart." "Blessed are the peacemakers." Which one catches in your heart? That is probably where He wants to work.

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Think back over this fall. Which of the capital sins trips you most? Anger, envy, pride, greed, gluttony, sloth, lust? Name it simply before God. This is not to discourage you. Every saint had one.

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Now hear the truth: your wounds don't disqualify you from holiness. They are where He wants to meet you. Think of St. Ignatius, laid up for months with a broken leg, his pride and his plans in pieces. That is where God found him.

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Bring to mind someone you love who has died. A parent. A spouse. A friend. A child. Pray for them by name. Ask them, if they are with God, to pray for you.

Close with this prayer: “All holy men and women, saints of God, pray for us. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.” Then choose one Beatitude to carry into this week.

Christ the King

The King who came looking for us

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17 · Psalm 23 · 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28 · Matthew 25:31-46 (Sheep and Goats)

I The Teaching

In the Readings: Naming the Whole Run

- The whole road we have walked: what sin is; anger, envy, pride, greed, gluttony, sloth and lust; the sins that cry to heaven; and the saints
- None of them, in the end, is what we're judged on

The Gospel: Sheep and Goats

> *"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)*

- The judgment scene doesn't ask which capital sin was mastered: it asks whether mercy was shown or withheld

Nature: What Kind of King

> *"A kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." (Preface of Christ the King)*

- Pius XI instituted this feast (Quas Primas, 1925) against a world organizing itself as if God did not exist. He asked that Christ reign in our minds, wills, hearts, and bodies (Quas Primas 33). That is the same four-part ground the series has covered.
- His throne is a cross; His title is nailed above it. He came "not to be served but to serve and to give his life" (Mk 10:45). Every capital sin was a bid to reign on our own terms; His kingship reigns by self-gift.
- "Christ… fully reveals man to himself" (Gaudium et Spes 22, John Paul II's favorite text). The King also shows what we are for. Every capital sin was a lie about what would make us happy.

Kinds: The Six Works of Judgment

The six works in Matthew 25 are the Church's corporal works of mercy. A loose pairing lets the whole series come home:

- **Feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty:** gluttony turned outward.
- **Welcoming the stranger:** the undoing of envy and pride's closed circles, and of the sins that cry to heaven.
- **Clothing the naked:** avarice undone. St. Basil: the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the one who has none.
- **Caring for the sick:** sloth's cure: showing up.
- **Visiting the imprisoned:** anger's cure: mercy toward the guilty, forgiving seventy-seven times.

Effects: "That God May Be All in All"

- "The last enemy to be destroyed is death… so that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:26, 28). The end of the story is not only that sin is defeated, but that God fills everything.
- Aquinas: final happiness is the vision of God (Summa I-II, Q. 3, a. 8). It is the only thing large enough for the desire every capital sin misdirected.

Remedies: The Shepherd Who Heals

> *"The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal." (Ezekiel 34:16)*

- Before the King judges, He shepherds. Ezekiel's verbs are the whole series' remedies in one line: seeking, bringing back, binding up, healing.
- This is healing of the whole person, spirit, soul, and body, at the center of Christ's ministry. Psalm 23 says the same: "he restores my soul."
- St. Josemaría's homily on this feast: Christ reigns first in each heart, through freedom and love (Christ is Passing By 179-187).

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- "In all your deeds remember your last end, and you will never sin" (Sirach 7:36; 7:40 in the Vulgate); the recollection material's key text on the Last Things, and a fitting last line for the whole series.
- Love, not fear, should lead us to consider the last things. Each of us will render an account of the talents received (Furrow 895); the parable of the talents (see the chapter on lust) and this judgment scene belong together.
- A corrective to end on: the quest for holiness cannot be reduced to fighting against sin; our heart plays an important part, and the struggle is centered on the person of Christ (The Way 584). The King, not the checklist.
- Jesus came to save, not to condemn: confidence in Him as our most understanding friend (The Way 730-732).
- Placing Christ at the summit of all human activities (Gaudium et Spes 75; Furrow 608); the kingship we're celebrating, lived in ordinary life.

Taking It Home

- Tanquerey's own conclusion to this whole struggle: some trace of these tendencies will always remain to try our patience, but "aided by God's grace, we shall overcome them more easily"
- Every sin named this fall was, underneath, a failure to see and serve the person in front of us, and every remedy pointed the same direction: outward, toward mercy

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.

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This final examination asks the King's one question: did I see Him in the least of His brothers and sisters? It follows the works of mercy, and then Pius XI's four places where Christ must reign.

The corporal works of mercy

- ☐ Have I fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, or looked away?
- ☐ Have I welcomed the stranger: the newcomer, the immigrant, the one who feels out of place?
- ☐ Have I clothed the naked, giving away what I don't use?
- ☐ Have I visited or cared for the sick, the homebound or the elderly?
- ☐ Have I remembered those in prison, and the families of prisoners?
- ☐ Have I prayed for and honored the dead, and comforted those who grieve?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I refused to help someone in serious need when I could have? (CCC 1033, 2447)

The spiritual works of mercy

- ☐ Have I counseled the doubtful, or helped someone who is confused about the faith?
- ☐ Have I taught the faith, especially to my children or those in my care?
- ☐ Have I lovingly corrected someone who was doing wrong, when it was my place?
- ☐ Have I comforted the sorrowful?
- ☐ Have I forgiven injuries?
- ☐ Have I borne wrongs patiently?
- ☐ Have I prayed for the living and the dead?

Christ reigning in my mind

- ☐ Do I accept the truths of the faith, or pick and choose?
- ☐ Do I take time to learn my faith: Scripture, the Catechism, good reading?

Christ reigning in my will

- ☐ Do I obey God's commandments when they cost me something?

- [ ] Is there an area of my life I have kept off-limits to Him?

Christ reigning in my heart

- [ ] Do I love God above all things, or has a false king taken His place?
- [ ] Which of the capital sins still reigns most in me?

Christ reigning in my body

- [ ] Do I treat my body as a temple of the Holy Spirit, in chastity and temperance?
- [ ] Do I care for my health as a gift?

The last things

- [ ] Do I think about my death and judgment with trust, or avoid the thought?
- [ ] Am I ready to meet the King today?
- [ ] Do I live for heaven, or only for this life?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do my spouse and I serve Christ together in others?

Parents

- [ ] Are my children learning from me to see Christ in the poor?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I offer my time to serve those who have no one?

Young people

- [ ] Have I been kind to the classmate nobody notices?

At work

- [ ] Do I see Christ in coworkers, customers and those who serve me?

Beneath the surface

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

- [ ] Which of Ezekiel's four is me: lost, strayed, injured, or sick (Ezekiel 34:16)?
- [ ] Have I tried to heal myself by willpower alone, instead of letting the Shepherd do it?
- [ ] Where have I stopped seeing Christ in others because I am tired or hurt?
- [ ] Can I trust that He is the King who came looking for me first?

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: When Did We See You?

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 25:31-46

Take a quiet moment. Maybe it's the Sunday before Thanksgiving, the house full of plans. Take a slow breath.

The King is here with you, not far off on a distant throne, but close, the way a shepherd stays close to his sheep.

When you are ready, picture the scene Jesus describes: the Son of Man coming in glory, all the nations gathered before Him. He separates them as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. And both groups ask the same surprised question: "Lord, when did we see you hungry?"

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The sheep didn't know they had served Him. The goats didn't know they had walked past Him. Sit with that for a moment. The King doesn't ask which capital sin you mastered. He asks whether you saw Him.

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Walk back through your past week. The cashier at the store. The coworker who seemed down. The person in traffic who cut you off. The teenager across the dinner table. The elderly neighbor. Where did you see Him? Where did you miss Him? Don't hurry.

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Now hear Ezekiel, in this Sunday's first reading. Before the King judges, He shepherds: "The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal." Hear each promise slowly. Which one is for you? Lost: you don't know how you got here. Strayed: you knew the way and wandered. Injured: someone hurt you, and it's still open. Sick: a pattern has a hold on you.

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Let Him come to you in that one. You don't heal yourself by willpower. "I myself will look after and tend my sheep." Let the Shepherd do His work.

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Look back over this whole fall. Every capital sin we named was, underneath, a way of not seeing. Every healing is getting our sight back. Ask the King for new eyes.

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Thanksgiving is this Thursday. Think of someone who might eat alone. Could you set a place for them? Ask Him.

Close by praying the Psalm one more time: “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” Our hearts are restless until they rest in Him, and He is the King who came looking for us first.

For Further Reading

The Church

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially 1846-1876 (sin), 1422-1498 (Penance), and the Ten Commandments (2052-2557)
- Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, ch. 5: the universal call to holiness
- Pope Pius XI, *Quas Primas* (1925), on the kingship of Christ

St. Thomas Aquinas

- *Summa Theologiae* I-II, Q. 71-89 (sin and vice); II-II, Q. 35 (sloth), 36 (envy), 118 (greed), 132 and 162 (vainglory and pride), 148 (gluttony), 153 (lust), 158 (anger)

Fr. Adolphe Tanquerey

- *The Spiritual Life*, nos. 820-899: the struggle against the capital sins

St. Josemaría Escrivá

- *The Way*, *Furrow*, *Forge*, *Friends of God*, *Christ Is Passing By*: all free at escriva.org

St. John Paul II

- *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*
- *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (1984), on sin and conversion

On healing

- Dr. Bob Schuchts, *Be Healed: A Guide to Encountering the Powerful Love of Jesus in Your Life* (2014)
- Dr. Bob Schuchts, *Be Transformed: The Healing Power of the Sacraments* (2017)
- The John Paul II Healing Center's *Healing the Whole Person* ministry, which shaped the "wound beneath the sin" sections of this series

On sloth

- Jean-Charles Nault, *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*

This booklet accompanies the homilies preached at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee, September 13 to November 22, 2026.