

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton & Saint Andrew Catholic Church, Milford, Ohio

Rev. John A. Klockeman, Saint Paul Seminary, Saint Paul, MN

Conference III: Living Heroic in Christ

A Christian is called to the heroic task of witnessing to the world a soul healed by grace.

Be aware of the possible impulse or temptation to fall into the trap that God will only love you once you “fix” yourselves from past wounds, sins, and/or the places within you that resist the graces of God who desires to permeate you with His healing. Be watchful; be alert to when you are vulnerable to them. And, avoid fixating on these areas, or remnants, in your life that give them too much attention and power. **God does not want to “fix” you; His desire is to heal your resistance to His love by drawing you into communion with Him.** It is there, in the communion of abiding with Him (John 15:1-11; Ezekiel 36:24-28,36), that God heals us, redeems us, and delivers and saves us. Then, those harassing remnant statements that are filled with lies will be filled by Him. Those remnant statements, filled with fear and reactive control will be filled with a trusting love that casts out all fear (cf. 1 John 4:18).

Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, #17: “It is characteristic of mature love that it calls into play all man’s potentialities; it engages the whole man, so to speak. Contact with the visible manifestations of God’s love can awaken within us a feeling of joy born of the experience of being loved. But this encounter also engages our will and intellect. . . . But this process is always open-ended; love is never ‘finished’ and complete; throughout life, it changes and matures, and thus remains faithful to itself.” (emphasis mine)

Rev. Raniero Cantalamessa, *Sober Intoxication of the Spirit*, pp. 91-92: “No one lives in love without sacrifice, without renunciation. The capacity that people have to give to another is equal to their readiness to deny themselves.”

Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

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_____ is the frenetic activity, the scattered living, the competing responsibilities, increased distractions, the convenience of sin, energies spread thin over vast, hurried areas of concern that directly interferes with our spiritual life . . . to pray is difficult, time is short, energies drained, rhythm of life scattered, self-knowledge is superficial, the heart is muted, and the desire to pray, much less knowledge of how to pray, is drowned out.

Novo Millennio ineunte, n. 34: “. . . it would be wrong to think that ordinary Christians can be content with a shallow prayer that is unable to fill their whole life. Especially in the face of the many trials to which today’s world subjects faith, they would be not only mediocre Christians, but ‘Christians at risk.’ They would run the insidious risk of seeing their faith progressively undermined, and would perhaps end up succumbing to the allure of ‘substitutes,’ accepting alternative religious proposals and even indulging in far-fetched superstitions. It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning (and mission).” (emphasis and addition mine)

_____ From “saying prayers” to “inner prayer” – attentive prayer to the movements of the heart, where one is caught up in the love of God and encounters Him alive and active -- there we live a profoundly Christian and apostolic life.

Tertullian, priest, from the treatise *On Prayer*: “Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God. Christ has willed that it should work no evil, and has given it all power over good.

Its only art is to call back the souls of the dead from the very journey into death, to give strength to the weak, to heal the sick, to exorcise the possessed, to open prison cells, to free the innocent from their chains. Prayer cleanses from sin (cf. 1 John 5:16ff), drives away temptations (cf. Psalm 8), stamps out persecutions, comforts the fainthearted, gives new strength to the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms the waves,

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confounds robbers, feeds the poor, overrules the rich, lifts up the fallen, supports those who are falling, sustains those who stand firm.

All the angels pray. Every creature prays (cf. Daniel 3: 56-88). Cattle and wild beasts pray and bend the knee . . . the birds rise and lift themselves up to heaven.

What more need be said on the duty of prayer? Even the Lord Himself prayed. To Him be honor and power for ever and ever. Amen."

•Ware, *The Art of Praying*, p. 67: "When inner prayer gains power, then it will control oral prayer, gaining dominion over external prayer and even absorbing it. As a result, the zeal of prayer will take fire, because then Paradise will be in the soul. If you content yourself with exterior prayer alone, you *may* cool in the work of prayer, even if you practice it with attention and understanding. The principle thing in prayer is a feeling heart." (emphasis mine)

St Augustine: "The entire Christian life is an exercise of holy desire."

Ware, *The Art of Prayer*, p. 40: ". . . the devil, . . . trembles at this all-powerful Name and has therefore, defamed it before many Christians, in order to make them reject this fiery weapon, fearsome to the enemy, but a saving grace to men." Therefore, . . .

Call upon the Name of Jesus -- the Name of clarity, power, humility, mercy, and the awe of holiness. At the Name of Jesus, the cosmos shutters, demons tremble, and all of creation obeys. His Name, Jesus, saves, forgives sins, redeems, heals, delivers, unbinds, death is destroyed, eternal life made accessible, and man is made whole! And, you, Christian, have only to utter His Name in faithful prayer! So, humble is He that this spiritual weapon is given for our disposal!

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•Ware, *The Art of Praying*, p. 199: A medicine which cures all the passions: “We must know that the constant invocation of the Name of God is a medicine that cures not only all the passions but also their effects.”

Saint Theresa of Avila: “Commit yourself never to stop praying and someday you will stop sinning.”

•Bishop Kallistos, *The Power of the Name*, p. 3: “True prayer, then, signifies the rediscovery and ‘manifestation’ of [your] baptismal grace” . . . our foundational and true identity, and inheritance as Christians.

The Cloud of Unknowing: “He need have no fear or error in believing that God is calling him to contemplation, regardless of what sort of person he is now or has been in the past. It is not what you are nor what you have been that God sees with His all-merciful eyes, but what you [deeply] desire [in the core of your being] to be.” (additions mine)

Remain Attentive to the Movements of the Heart = ACKNOWLEDGE, RELATE, RECEIVE, & RESPOND any thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires, imaginations, and memories

Ware, *Art of Prayer*, p. 182: “Attention to what goes on in the heart and to what comes forth from it is the chief work of a well-ordered Christian life . . . but to this watchfulness, discernment must always be added . . . attention is useless without discernment.” **Theophan the Recluse**

1. **██████**: (A reading of the heart) **Acknowledge**

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•First, to be filled with the Holy Spirit: “before all else [one is to be wrapped] in an absorbing concern for the Beloved” (*Dubay, And, You are Christ’s*, p. 123)

•In a reverential silence, with awe, & slowly attentive to the movements in your heart, acknowledge and personalize the movements to the Lord. Allow your heart to speak to you and “lift it up to the Lord” so that it may be matured, or healed, forgiven, or unbound.

2 Cor. 10:5: “. . . take every thought captive to obey Christ.”

2. **Step 2**: Acknowledge & Relate

•Take the movements of your heart (thoughts, feelings, hopes, deep desires, memories, imagination, fears, concerns, etc.) and ponder upon them (like Mary) by taking them to Jesus, to the cross, to the throne of grace/mercy.

•Allow the movements of your heart to ruminate and touch/encounter the whole person: from the surface realizations of life to psychological insights to the core of your spiritual life.

It is the deepest part of our being which we often hide, or suppress, even from ourselves. But, this is the terrain where a person cooperates and receives the Divine Physician who heals, delivers, and renews us. It is from the center, the heart, where God is received as Lord and King. It is from the heart where God desires to encounter the whole man/woman so that the saint and person He desires us to make of us may burst through.

Blasé Pascal: “The sole cause of man’s unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room”

3. **Step 3**: Relate and Receive (of movements in the heart in #2)

Two Types of Prayer engaged in Oratio:

1. **Dialogue with God** → share the content of your heart with simple words

1 Peter 5:6-7: "Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you."

2. **Prayer of Consecration** → offering to God parts of ourselves that we previously believe that God did not want . . . open to God to change our deepest self.

Romans 12:1-2: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Saint Ambrose, *Homily on Saint Agnes*, Vol. III, p. 1312: "I will be His who first chose me for Himself"

4. **Contemplation**: **Receive & Respond**

Definition of Contemplation = a wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One who loves us . . . where we are healed and made whole . . . abiding in His love; sharing in His person . . . for this we were made (CCC1721; 1726; 2548).

- Rest simply with the One who seeks to transform you; use words when helpful & let go of words when they are no longer necessary.

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Contemplative prayer -- this receptivity of the prayer of the heart, can heal many, if not all, of the wounds of humanity.

Ware, *The Art of Prayer*, p. 164: "The ladder that leads to the Kingdom is hidden within you, and is found in your own soul. Dive into yourself and in your soul you will discover the rungs by which to ascend." **Saint Isaac the Syrian**

Saint Katherine Drexel: "I look up in wonder at God's wonderful ways and thought how little we imagine what may be the result of listening and acting on a desire God puts into the heart, . . . Yes, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is with you . . . nourish before Him great desires."

An additional step from "inner prayer" to "inner prayer in action" . . . or, "faith working through love" (cf. **Galatians 5:6**)

5. **Respond**

- The internal awareness of an encounter with God manifests itself in an external call to respond to grace with a change of life, the abandonment of what binds you, a growth in virtue and self-knowledge (cf. *1 Thess. 4*), so that the capacity of the whole person is engaged in the universal Christian call to holiness and mission in the kingdom (cf. *Ephesians 6: 10-20; or James 2: 14-18*).

Dubay, *Deep Conversation, Deep Prayer*, p.97: "To bring people closer to God, competency and clarity are important, but they are not enough. Of themselves they do not touch hearts deeply. Personal sanctity and goodness do. It is the saints who light fires." (emphasis mine)

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Saint Therese: "If only everyone weak and imperfect like me felt as I do, no one would despair of reaching the heights of love, for Jesus does not ask for glorious deeds. He asks only for self-surrender and for gratitude."

Jeremiah 6: 16a: "Stand beside the earliest roads, ask the pathways of old: Which is the way to good and walk it; thus you will find rest for your souls."

1 Peter 5:6-10: "Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you."

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, book IV, chapter 9: "No possible degree of holiness or heroism which has ever been recorded of the greatest saints is beyond what He is determined to produce in every one of us in the end. [For] God is forcing us on, or up, to a higher level to place us in situations where the mettle of our person is tested, strengthened, and developed so that the person and the saint He means to make of us bursts through."

Opening Collect of the Friday of the 4th Week of Lent: "O God, who have prepared fitting helps for us in our weakness, grant, we pray, that we receive their healing effects with joy and reflect them in a holy way of life."

Let us open these abundant treasures of *fitting helps* that God provides generously through His Church to those who freely seek Him . . .

Addendum

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“The Fathers do not categorize people as moral and immoral, good or bad, on the basis of moral laws. At [its] depth humanity is differentiated into: (1) those in need of healing (the sick in soul); (2) those being healed; and, (3) those healed.”

Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos Hierotheos, p. 30

Specific Tools for Combatting the Eight Evil Thoughts:

Pride: To exercise humility, to renounce undue competition, to practice the mercy of Christ speaking truth motivated by charity

Vainglory: Love God for His own sake, practice asceticism of thought, pray the litany of humility

Acedia: Practice works of mercy/service, manual labor, do the opposite of the promptings of acedia, avoid grumbling, help others in need, avoid too much leisure time alone/numbing activities, practice moderation in speech.

Anger: Reconcile with others, forgive and let go of a memory, guard your heart by prudent vulnerability, practice almsgiving, pray for others

Dejection/Sadness: Stay in relationship with others, relate, correct our faults, avoid destructive/spiraling thoughts and emotions, avoid self-abasement and self-pity, resist morbid suffering/victim mentality, catch the thought quickly, practice detachment

Gluttony: Practice intentional fasting/“offer it up,” exercise and training of the body, practice moderation, slow down your eating and drinking

Lust: Practice honesty/transparency with yourself and/or spiritual director/confessor/ spouse/ trusted friend, seek company that draws out what is good and fruitful, incorporate other forms of legitimate intimacies in your life, practice humility, follow the opposite course

Avarice: Remember that God is our goal in life, live with gratitude and practice renunciation, be in the world but not of the world, be intentional to practice simplicity, refrain from envy of another’s goods, be eased and directed by the life of daily prayer

Theodore Roosevelt: “It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly . . . who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never known neither victory nor defeat.”

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Ephesians 6:10-12: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For, we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Addendum

1 Thess. 4:1,7: “My brothers, we beg and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, even as you learned from us how to conduct yourselves in a way pleasing to God – which you are indeed doing – so you must learn to make still greater progress. God has not called us to immorality but to holiness.”

Frequent practice of the sacraments/sacramentals
Ceaseless Prayer, ie. “The Jesus Prayer”
Daily prayer and daily Examen prayer
Recollection of day’s/past events & roots of thoughts

Saint Theresa of Avila: “Commit yourself never to stop praying and someday you will stop sinning.”

Manual labor . . . a means to extinguish the flames of desire
Awareness of thoughts . . . permits distance from the thoughts settling in the heart, which is the first step in discerning their origin

James 5:7-8: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you men of double mind.”

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Watchfulness . . . remaining sober and alert (cf. **1 Peter 5:6-9**)

Use of silence!!! -- in outward activity & inner stillness/simplicity of life

Blasé Pascal: *"I have often said that the sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room."* -- a diversion from self, of reaching interior awareness, and resistance to living "within." You find it difficult to hear your heart, your legitimate needs, and need for healing, much less discern the voice of God or the those movements of the heart moving you away from God.

Use of righteous anger against one's sin and the enemy

Practice of the ascetical life – aided by contemplation

Fasting, Almsgiving, Spiritual Reading, and Prayer Vigils

The Praktikos, p.4: "The works of asceticism do not suffice to heal the powers of the soul completely. They must be complemented by a contemplative activity which is appropriate to these faculties . . ."

Asceticism enlarges the life of a Christian to live freely, and willingly, by bearing witness of a soul cured by the grace of God, and thereby, drawing others toward salvation in Him.

Practice of **Penthos** . . . a recognition and compunction over our choices of sin and our tendency to sin over the pursuit and love of God – practices such as: sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, acts of contrition, penitential rite at Mass, the Way of the Cross, the gift of tears, meditation on the wounds of Christ before a crucifix, etc.

Cf. *The Praktikos, p. 24, footnote 42:* God is the object of our pursuit and love is the means of that pursuit: purification of the passions supposes love. Love fully flowers only when the passions (ie. The Eight Evil Thoughts) are put in order (ie. subdued in asceticism and in the maturation of the virtues).

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(emphasis mine)

Addendum

Why is it that those who seem to give up everything for God seem to possess everything in the end? Why, because *they saw the need to suffer the honest coming of truth about their own character!*

Lorenzo Scupoli, *Spiritual Combat*: "This is indeed the hardest of all struggles; for while we strive against self, self is striving against us, and therefore is the victory here most glorious and precious in the sight of God."
(cf. Psalm 116: 12-19)

1. Discern the context surrounding your fall into sin:

What are the habits/attitudes/thoughts/places/persons/or things that are present?

Saint Therese: "When we surrender to discouragement or despair, it is usually because we are thinking too much of the past or future."

2. Remain attentive to how you permitted "thoughts" to enter, take root, and grow: Again, examine the exterior and interior context and choices . . .

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Way to Master Thoughts (Logismoi): “The way to master thoughts is to notice them early, often, and consistently, and respond to them deliberately.” (cf. *Tools Matter*, p. 7, **Mary Margaret Funk**) (emphasis mine). Do not let evil thoughts take root!

3. Seek to discern the root desire, or root sin, root motivation, or root wound by which your passions are fed:

Look for the legitimate desire underneath the sin that you were seeking – examine past confessions for insights and patterns of thoughts and choices to expose any underlying legitimate desires
To discern, understand your temperament (+/- tendencies)

Pray and ask for guidance by the Holy Spirit for insight: “Where in my past is the origin of this habitual sin?”
If it is a habitual sin, ask it, “What do you want of me/from me?”

4. If the sin(s) is habitual, then remain attentive to the rituals, or stepping stones, that lead you toward temptation:

Identify the time cycles between temptations presenting themselves
What are the “red flags” that always appear prior to a fall?
What habits/attitudes/thoughts/places/persons/or things that increase one’s weakness of resolve against temptation?
What aids in the stoking of the fire of particular, repeated passions?

5. Develop a “game plan” that seeks to meet the underlying, legitimate need/desire to avoid the “near occasion of sin”:

Find creative, holy, non-sinful ways to “feed a legitimate underlying desire”
Broadly define your legitimate desire (ie. lust and search for intimacy)
Incorporate into your rhythm of life tasks/activities that refresh you, that give you life, energy, and direction
Become accountable to a confessor and/or spiritual director or close friend

Colossians 1:9b-11: “May you attain full knowledge of God’s will through perfect wisdom and spiritual insight. Then you will lead a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to Him in every way. You will multiply good works of every sort and

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grow in the knowledge of God. *By the might of His glory you will be endowed with the strength needed to stand fast, even to endure joyfully whatever may come.*"

Saint Ignatius of Antioch: "The glory of God is man fully alive."