

# **The Will to Love Spiritual Audit Values Handbook Part II: Hope**

**Our Relationship with Self  
The Call To Be Perfect  
Purgation and Consolation  
Detachment  
Fasting**

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# Hope

## Definition

The word “hope” is often used lightly, as a simple wish like, “Wouldn’t it be nice if ....” It might be a mere thought, like we might “hope” we do well in school or hope we get a job. It might be a feeling of optimism, like when we hope our team wins the championship. But in Catholic spirituality, “hope” has a specific meaning based in trust – an expectation that God will give us what God has promised. As St. Paul explained to the Romans, hope is relevant to “what we do not see,” and because of hope “we wait with endurance.” So, we define **“hope” as a quality of acting with the expectation, out of trust in God, that God will provide the grace necessary to persevere in this world, so that we may be in union with God in the next.**

## Scripture

Romans 8:18-26: “Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance. In hope we are saved.”

Matthew 7:7-11: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him.”

John 14:16-18: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.”

Isaiah 41:10: “Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.”

Romans 5:2-5: “We boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

## Reflection

In Catholic theology, the theological virtue of hope is a gift from God which is given to us when we receive sanctifying grace from Baptism or Confession. Even when received, we still need to cooperate with that grace. The value described in this workbook is intended to reflect how we can cooperate with that grace.

Hope is not a feeling or thought, but an action taken in trust. We show that we trust God to deliver on his promises by what we do, not by what we feel, think, or say. As Christians, we believe God has made many promises. Importantly, He promised to give us the help we need to heal so that we can love Him and love others. We just need to ask for and cooperate with his grace. He also promised to prepare a place in heaven for those who love Him. Since God promised to do things, we can trust Him to deliver.

To help our understanding of what hope is, it might be helpful to think about what hope is not. Two attitudes and actions that are contrary to hope are presumption and despair.

Presumption distorts hope by expecting the promise of heaven while bypassing the need to love God and neighbor in this world, or the need for God's grace to persevere in that love, or both. We are presumptuous when we believe we do not need God's help. We are presumptuous when we believe we do not need to repent. In the Gospel of Matthew (see Matthew 7:21-29), Jesus cautions his disciples against presuming they are entitled to heaven by merely saying that they believe ("Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven"). Instead, Jesus says that we have to act on our belief and do "the will of my Father" - love God and our neighbor. To do so, we need his help. Presumption reveals itself when we claim to be Christian, yet do not love our neighbor, are unrepentant, and don't ask for God's help.

Despair is against the very nature of hope – it is acting with the belief that we cannot be forgiven for what we have done, or that God will not give us the grace needed to help us, or that God is not with us in our suffering. Despair shows we do not trust that God is willing or able to forgive us, heal us, or enable us to love Him and our neighbor, or that God wants us to be in heaven with Him. When in despair, we give up on God.

Hope extinguishes presumption and despair and is important as we begin the work of detachment from worldly things. This work of detachment is hard and involves discomfort and suffering. So, we need, and should expect, and therefore should ask for, God's help.

Our ability to act with hope develops in stages. We first need to notice and acknowledge our need for God's help in our efforts to change. As we go through these exercises of detachment, those times which we find difficult can be good reminders of our need for hope. However, we also should try to notice those times when it looks easy too, so that we do not forget about the need for God's help. The next stage of development is prayer. In response to recognizing our need to God's help, we can interject a short prayer. Over time, such prayers will become habit and help hold back thoughts of presumption or despair.

When we are fully in union with God's love, the expectation of participation in divine love becomes our reality in the present moment. The detachment that we seek from worldly things, through his help, becomes our reality. At that time, both faith and hope are no longer necessary, and being love becomes our reality.

## Strength, Fortitude, and Courage

### **Definition**

Fortitude, fortitude (nope, not a typo), and courage are closely related, but not quite the same thing. In Catholic theology, “Fortitude” is another of the *gifts* of the Holy Spirit, like “fear of the Lord” and “piety.” CCC 1831 and Isaiah 11:2-3. In some translations of Isaiah it is called Strength, we will use that. Just to make things easy to understand, in Catholic theology “fortitude” also is the name of a *virtue* that we work on, which leads us to act and endure while facing hardships. So, as a *gift*, we are never entitled to Strength and can’t earn it, but we receive it as a gift when we receive sanctifying grace. When we have the gift of Strength, it acts directly upon our will to enable us to do supernatural and heroic acts – the gift of Strength perfects the virtue of fortitude. However, we have to develop the virtue of fortitude first to cultivate the gift of Strength. Courage is similar to fortitude but relates to the *willingness* to face fears and difficulties, whereas fortitude relates to acting and enduring *when faced* with fears and difficulties.

**So, for our purposes, we define “fortitude” as the quality of acting and enduring, when faced with all sorts of difficulties, sometimes with heroic effort, to remain faithful in our love of God and neighbor and “courage” is the quality of willingly facing difficulties to develop our fortitude.**

### **Scripture**

Philippians 4:13: “I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.”

John 9: “His parents said this because they were afraid of [being] expelled from the synagogue.”

Mark 14:66-72: “Peter began to curse and to swear, ‘I do not know this man about whom you are talking.’”

Acts 17:22-33: “When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff.”

1 Peter 4:12 to 5:10: “Be sober and vigilant. ... Resist [the devil], steadfast in faith, knowing that your fellow believers throughout the world undergo the same sufferings.”

Acts 7: 59-60: “As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them”; and when he said this, he fell asleep.”

Matthew 17:20: “Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

### **Reflection**

Theological texts frequently use the story of Stephen's martyrdom in the Acts of the Apostles as an example of fortitude. The scene begins with him preaching in Jerusalem, "filled with grace and power." The scene ends with him being stoned to death, yet he still cried out "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." The giving of our very lives for the sake of other souls is considered one of the highest forms of fortitude.

We hope not to *die* because of our faith. But we must expect to face trials or difficulties, and it is the virtue of fortitude, strengthened by the gift of Fortitude, that will keep us from giving up the faith. Venerable Louis of Granada put it this way, "Truly the love of God is sweetness, but the way which leads to it contains much that is bitter, for self-love must first be conquered, and there is nothing harder to nature than to fight against it and all that it claims." What we have to fight against are our own tendencies to indulge in pleasures, avoid discomfort, give in to fear, doubt God, and isolate ourselves from others. That fight is the work of detachment of this second Workbook.

Where fortitude is especially important is in our own witness to what we believe. The bible has many examples of those who failed to acknowledge Jesus. Peter denied Jesus three times. St. Paul preached to the Athenians without talking about Jesus, and then they scoffed at the idea of the resurrection of the dead. He did not win them over. When Jesus healed a man who had been blind from birth, the man's own parents would not admit how their son regained his sight - because they were afraid of being expelled from the synagogue.

In contrast, the same blind man, each time authorities questioned him he answered, without any such fear, that Jesus had healed him. And on Pentecost, the same St. Peter who denied Christ stood up in front of the community to preach about Jesus. We become weak when we let ourselves be attached to worldly things – our desires, pleasure, wealth, fame, power – and in our weakness we run the risk of denying Jesus.

The practice of developing the virtue fortitude begins with noticing – noticing anything – however small in our daily circumstances which might lead us away from faith, joy, or generally our values. We can use each of these moments to practice fortitude. After noticing such circumstances in the moment, we can practice choosing to act and endure towards our values, aligned with our faith. With this continual practice we may be able to develop a habit on which we can rely when another more challenging moment calls for it.

We also can cooperate with the gift of the Holy Spirit that reinforces this virtue. To be properly disposed to the efficacy of this gift requires sanctifying grace through baptism or confession and cooperation in prayer that we may trust in the Holy Spirit. But I also found one unexpected advice in my readings on fortitude: "It is principally in the reception of the Holy Eucharist that we can seek from Jesus the strength we need in order to overcome all obstacles." [T, 1333]. To be spiritually strong, receive the Eucharist often.

When a soul is in full union with God, fortitude has served its purpose. The gift has helped the soul to endure all sorts of suffering, from the pain of detachment through the complete surrender and conformity of its will to God's. Perhaps, the nature of the trial we can expect to joyfully endure with fortitude is eternal, as we become one with Christ, and thus one with the suffering that comes with being Mercy incarnate – being love.

# Discipline and Responsibility

## **Definition**

Work Hard. Do Your Job. Sounds like typical advice we all hear, whether we are entrepreneurs, athletes, artists, employees, or even volunteering. Even in secular environments, in our social contracts, we expect that others will do the hard work involved in whatever duty they have. The popular notions of these themes are often rigid or legalistic and focus on our own capacity to work. This sense of effort and duty is often countered by an internal resistance and desire for comfort. So, when things are not going well, we are told, “Try Harder.” As with any other effort, growing in the spiritual life also requires discipline and responsibility. But we are not on our own – we have God’s help. Also, the purpose that guides our effort and duty is the love of God. **So, we will define “discipline” as the quality of consistent, structured, purposeful effort, cooperating with grace, in spiritual practices and actions done out of love for God and to align the will with God’s, and “responsibility” as the quality of faithfully and conscientiously fulfilling our duties out of love for God and others.**

## **Scripture**

Matthew 16:24: “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.’”

Matthew 25:14-30 (emphasis added): “...[A] man who was going on a journey called in his servants and *entrusted his possessions to them*. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each *according to his ability*. ... After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. [To the first two he said,] ‘*Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities*. Come, share your master’s joy.’ Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a demanding person... so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’ His master said to him in reply, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! ... Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.’

1 Corinthians 9:24-27: “Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”

## **Reflection**

We all have several kinds of work to do: taking care of our physical, mental, and spiritual health; earning our keep through labor or business; taking care of our families or neighbors; doing the work of being a disciple.

But it is important to remember, as St. Pope John Paul II wrote, that “work is for man, not man for work.” It is the person doing the work, not the result of work, which has value. As he wrote in *Laborem Exercens* (27): “Work... is an important means for realizing one's human potential, for realizing one's responsibilities toward others, and for cooperating with the Creator. In this sense, it is part of God's plan for the world. Work, as a sharing in God's work, takes on a deeper meaning when done in love and with responsibility.” By working we share in the creative nature of God; we are co-creating with God.

Jesus' description of discipleship highlights the relationship between responsibility and discipline. “Your cross” is your responsibility – it is whatever God has entrusted to you. Denying yourself and taking up that cross is the effort, or discipline, you bring to that cross. As St. Paul exhorts us in that effort – run so as to win.

The parable of the ten talents explains what that means, since we are all entrusted by God with something, however large or small, *according to our ability*. God knows what we can handle and expects us *to be faithful* with what we have been given. Note that the master in this parable praises the first two servants for being *faithful in using what they were given*, not for the amount they produced. The third servant was cast out because he hid what he was given out of fear. When we fail to use our gifts, we avoid sharing in God's creative nature and thus avoid God. We need to use the time, talents, and resources entrusted to us by God, and not be lazy.

But how do we grow in discipline? It starts by identifying the gifts and responsibilities God has entrusted to us. Then, we have to ask ourselves if we are willing to, out of love for God and neighbor, fulfill those duties. Are we willing to commit to making consistent, structured, and purposeful effort required to fulfill those duties? We can start to notice how we spend our time – a scarce resource that we have to devote to our efforts. Are we allocating our time appropriately for the efforts required to fulfill our duties? If we find it difficult to keep consistent, to be structured and purposeful, we can try to identify what is holding us back. What holds us back is often something of which we need to let go, often a desire for comfort, or pleasure, or avoiding discomfort. The source of that desire is often some injury for which we need healing, and we can bring that to prayer, the sacraments, or natural healing.

The parable of the talents ends with phrases that sound opposite to significant themes of the Gospel. Here, Jesus says that “to everyone who has, more will be given” and “from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” But we usually hear that the poor will inherit the kingdom. In the parable of the talents, I don't think Jesus is referring to material wealth, but faith. Faithfully using the gifts God entrusts to you is what leads to heaven. But how are we given *even more* responsibility in heaven? I suspect that the fulfillment of responsibility and discipline, in union with God, is what the saints experience: an eternity of the responsibility to bring everyone else to heaven, by sharing in Jesus' merciful suffering and working consistently through prayer and worship, interceding for us all. Rev. 5:8.

## Perseverance and Resilience

### **Definition**

“It’s not whether you get knocked down, it’s whether you get up.” – Vince Lombardi

Secular society recognizes the value of *perseverance* – the ability to keep going towards a goal in the face of adversity. In Catholic spirituality, our faith and our soul are at stake, not just any goal. But we are not on our own. We are not expected to endure suffering or adversity by our own strength, but with the help of God. Resilience is similar to perseverance, meaning we keep going, but in response to our own failures, our own self-inflicted adversity, rather than external adversity. With resilience, we rely on God’s mercy, repent, and adapt, to rise again and continue forward. **So we define “perseverance” as the quality of enduring adversity while staying true to our responsibilities and faith out of love for God and trusting in God’s grace, and “resilience” as the quality of recovering from our own failures to continue with our responsibilities and faith out of love for God and trusting in God’s grace and mercy.**

### **Scripture**

Proverbs 24:16: “Though the just fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble from only one mishap.”

Galatians 6:9: “Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.”

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who perseveres in temptation, for when he has been proved he will receive the crown of life that he promised to those who love him.”

2 Corinthians 11:23-28: “Five times ... I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fasting, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led to sin, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.”

### **Reflection**

Being a Christian isn’t easy. Growth in the spiritual life involves letting go, detaching from the things of this world. We will work on detaching from our desires for pleasure, wealth, power, and fame. But before we start that work, it is helpful to build up other abilities. The values discussed in this Workbook were ordered with this preparation in mind. While good discipline helps, structure and consistency work so long as there is no adversity, suffering, lack of consolation, setbacks, or other problems that disrupt our structures or routines. We will fail many times. At some point, the challenges, setbacks, temptations, and attacks will seem to be endless or unbearable. We need to be prepared for that to happen.

Some challenges will be truly external, at least initially – and hopefully unlike Paul, who was lashed, beaten, and shipwrecked. There will be sickness, accidents, family issues, employment issues, housing issues, friendship issues. There may be economic crises, political crises, natural disasters. We may be attacked personally, whether physically or reputationally or economically. But ultimately, everything external is converted into something internal – a sensation, emotion, feeling, thought, memory, imagination – and it is how we react the internal version of those events that affects our souls.

But some challenges will come from the inside – from feeling pain or suffering or discomfort from trying to detach from worldly things, or from feeling constantly tempted. We may grow angry or resentful. We may have all sorts of fears – that we don't have what it takes, that we will end up destitute, hurt, or worse. We may have all sorts of anxiety about the future, or regret about the past. We may begin to doubt or feel discouraged. Sometimes we might just want a break and have a little comfort! We may at first feel consolation from growing in the spiritual life, but then lose that consolation.

Even if we have none of these challenges, trudging ahead in our faith journey would be easier if we also did not get in our own way. We will inevitably fail *at something*. It would be incorrect to say that failure itself is not a problem – but how we respond to that failure is what is implicated in Resilience, and further affects our souls.

One example in the spiritual life is the struggle with what is called “habitual sin.” Habitual sin may be the one thing that, deep down inside, you want to purge from your life but find it difficult. With habitual sin we are, at best, caught in a cycle. We may feel powerless. But powerlessness can lead us to worse – we may become hard on ourselves or on others around us.

Perseverance and Resilience are values directed towards fighting the internal fight. They support you as you work toward other values, since, as you grow in perseverance and resilience, you grow in your ability to act independently of all those external and internal challenges. All those challenges acting against your will come through the sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and imaginations. They *can* be resisted when we rely on the Holy Spirit and are cooperating with the gifts of Fortitude and Hope. Frequent confession and reception of the Eucharist helps to strengthen our souls.

Growing in the values of perseverance and resilience, growing our resistance, begins with noticing – noticing those sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and imaginations, which arise when we are externally challenged, internally challenged, or fail. Even if all we are noticing is how powerless we feel or how much we want to give up, our noticing can help unhook our actions from those thoughts and feelings and lead us to prayers for help.

At the risk of sounding trite, the reward of perseverance and resilience is the protection of our souls, for which the final reward is heaven. The fulfillment of these values in heaven is their disappearance. “He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain.” Rev. 21:4

## Diligence and Zeal

### *Definition*

The terms “diligence” and “zeal” describe the nature of the effort we bring to a task. Diligence usually relates more to the level of care - promptness, attention, and effort. Zeal relates more to the level of energy. In secular life, diligence might be understood as anything from working hard to sacrificial commitment; zeal might be perceived as anything from enthusiasm to fanaticism. In the spiritual life, these two values translate into the effort we bring to the condition of our souls, which means the effort we bring to learning to exercise our will to love God and others. **As a value, we could say that “diligence” is the quality of taking prompt and committed action, and “zeal” is the quality of acting with enthusiasm and energy, towards conforming our will to God’s.**

### *Scripture*

Philippians 2:12: “So then, my beloved, ...**work out** your salvation with fear and trembling.”

Romans 12:9-12: “Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. **Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.**”

2 Peter 1:4-7: “He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. For this very reason, **make every effort** to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love.”

Ruth 2:7: “Ever since she came this morning she has remained here until now, **with scarcely a moment’s rest.**”

Luke 13:6-9 – “For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down.”

Hebrews 6:11-12 – “Do not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises.”

2 Thessalonians 3:10 – “We instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat.”

### *Reflection*

In the U.S. and English legal systems, diligence is one of the primary professional responsibilities of a lawyer for a client. See ABA code of professional conduct Rule 1.3. Notably, this duty is preceded in these rules only by competence, and a definition of the

scope of the attorney-client relationship – and *before* the obligation of confidentiality. The comments to the rules identify a few characteristics of diligence: acting “despite opposition, obstruction or personal inconvenience,” “with commitment and dedication,” and “with reasonable promptness”. It also means not trying to do too much at once. While acting diligently is expected, acting zealously, for lawyers, does not give them a great reputation, as it has few guiderails other than staying within bounds of the law and decency.

But what does it mean to be diligent and zealous for the condition of your soul? Fr. Benedict Groeschel put it this way: “salvation is the only task that we have set before us that will last forever” so “organize your behavior around your eternal salvation.” [Arise from Darkness, p. 89]. The state of our souls is the greatest priority, to be addressed promptly, with focused attention, great effort, and abundant energy. We are called to bring that level of effort to conforming our will to God’s, to learning how to love God and neighbor.

As Peter said in his letter (2 Peter 1), we need to make every effort to root out our evil desires and replace them with love. One of the great examples of diligence in the Old Testament for us to model is Ruth. Before that Ruth was a Moabite woman who married an Israelite man. When her husband died, she stayed with her mother-in-law, Naomi, also a widow, and traveled to – Bethlehem. To provide food for both Naomi and her, Ruth gathered grain leftover by harvesters in a field – a task called “gleaning.” Laws in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 24:19-21) specifically allowed widows to do this, as widows generally did not have means of financial support, security, or inheritance. In this task of caring for mother-in-law and herself, she worked “scarcely with a moment’s rest.” She “gleaned in the field until evening, and when she beat out what she had gleaned it came to about an ephah of barley,” which is about a bushel – almost fifty pounds! Her diligence and fidelity to Naomi led to marriage to Boaz, the field’s owner. Ruth became the mother of Obed, who was father of Jesse, who was the father of King David.

One quality of behavior that opposes diligence (as well as discipline discussed above) is sloth. Sloth is a lack of effort, whether in our natural lives or spiritual lives. Several passages from Scripture admonish against, or illustrate consequences of, failing to put in the effort. The parable of the fig tree reminds us that a disciple should be bearing fruit for the kingdom of God. Paul’s admonishment in Thessalonians is in stark contrast to the story of Ruth, and shows how diligence applies even to our basic needs like eating.

How do we learn to do our task of organizing our behavior around our eternal salvation to prepare ourselves for union with God, and do it diligently, with scarcely a moment’s rest? There are two parts: committing to make an effort and noticing when we are not. The commitment to an effort can be in choosing any of these values, and choosing any action, however small or large, toward that value. Commit. What we can start to notice is whatever gets in the way of making that commitment or following through with it. Thoughts might emerge, like “I don’t feel like it today”, “I’m too tired,” “I’ll get around to it,” “I really don’t care”, “I can’t”. Whatever the thought might be, start to note what is going on in your head. Then you will be able to work on redirecting your attention to your commitment.

What do “diligence” and “zeal” look like when perfected? What is Christ-like or saint- or martyr-like diligence and zeal, as we see them in heaven? The saints in heaven have less to be concerned about in their own spiritual growth, so I think they are focused on loving and worshipping God and loving and interceding for the rest of the human race. Revelation 4:8 describes the “four living creatures” who “Day and night ... do not stop exclaiming: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty’”. And, “Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones” – Rev. 5:8.

# Simplicity

## ***Definition***

One might define simplicity in contrast to what it is not: complication. In the context of how we act, we can be overcomplicated in what we do, how we do it, or the purpose(s) for which we do it. What all the spiritual teachers of the Catholic Church have emphasized is that we have a singular purpose: love of God and neighbor. They also encourage us to approach whatever task we have with intentional focus, with order and peace. Finally, they encourage us to do one thing at a time, paying attention to God, the person in front of us, or the task at hand. Doing these things reduces complexity in our lives and thus improves our ability to be loving to God and others in the present moment. So, **we define “simplicity” as the quality of bringing intentional focus to our actions in the present moment out of love of God and neighbor.**

## ***Scripture***

1 Corinthians 10:31: “...whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”

2 Corinthians 1:12: “For our boast is this ... we have conducted ourselves in the world ... with simplicity and sincerity from God...”

Matthew 6:22: “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.”

Luke 10:38–42: Martha “had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me.” The Lord said to her in reply, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.”

Philippians 3:19: “Their end is destruction. ...Their minds are occupied with earthly things.”

## ***Reflection***

When reading the Gospels, do you have the sense that in every moment Jesus is doing precisely one thing with intentional focus? He is either attentive in prayer, or paying attention to the person right in front of him, like Martha’s sister Mary, or going to the next place in his mission. Of course, it does help to have the knowledge of what is coming ...

You may have had the pleasure of serving many guests in your household, like Martha. You might have become “anxious and worried about many things” like Martha - from preparing food, to ensuring that each guest has what they need and is comfortable, and engaging in conversation with everyone. Attention is dispersed and not focused.

That experience is analogous to problems that can arise from a complicated life. If we have too many things that we are doing, too many things taking our attention, we become anxious and worried – emotions that are due to spending too much time thinking about the future and not being in the present moment. Instead of focusing on God, the person in front of us, or the task at hand, our mind is occupied with something else, and we do neither thing well. Those distractions often reveal something is on our hearts other than God, and “[f]or where your treasure is, there also will your heart be.” If we are focused on the future and distracted by many things, we may be driven by desires such as ambition, pride, a desire for recognition or to please others, or selfishness.

If our singular purpose is doing everything for the greater glory of God, for love of God, for love of neighbor, then our focus needs to be on the present moment. Pray when it is time to pray. Work when it is time to work. Serve when it is time to serve. Rest when it is time to rest. There is of course a place for planning, for deciding what to do next. So, plan when it is time to plan.

So how do we learn to live with intentional focus to our actions in the present moment out of love of God and neighbor?

We can start by noticing whether we are focusing our attention on what we are doing in any given moment, or if our mind is wandering to other things. In the worst case, we start to notice when we did not do something well, because we lacked that singular focus. Another technique to start doing that is taking the time, at the end of our day, to reflect on what we did and how focused we were. Or, take the time to name the things that you are worrying about or that are making you anxious. As we notice where our attention is, then we can work on bringing our focus back to the present moment and eliminating those things in our lives that make them overly complicated.

“Simplicity” perfected is exemplified by the angels and saints in heaven. They are described in the book of Revelation as doing one thing: praying before God in worship and intercession for the rest of the human race. Imagine that everyone in heaven in this moment is, out of love of God and of you, intentionally focused on praying that you may one day be there with them.

# Orderliness

## **Definition**

A close cousin to simplicity is orderliness. “Order” is the structure we bring to our lives, which implements what we choose as our priorities and arranges them in proper harmony. Order affects both our physical surroundings and how we spend our time. A common objection to structure is that it stifles freedom, but practice reveals the opposite - structure frees the mind to focus on the present moment and brings peace. Chaotic use of our time or a chaotic physical space causes distraction and anxiety. Also, Catholic theology has a deep sense of how everything should be *rightly ordered* first towards loving God, then to loving neighbor, then to loving self. So, **we define “orderliness” as the quality of bringing structure to our actions and surroundings, so our actions are directed to loving God and neighbor.**

## **Scripture**

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (excerpts): “There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. ... a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.... a time to tear down, and a time to build, ... a time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them ... a time to keep, and a time to cast away, a time to rend, and a time to sew.”

Acts 2:42–47: The first Christians in Jerusalem “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”

1 Corinthians 14:40: “But everything must be done properly and in order.”

## **Reflection**

The quote “A place for everything and everything is in its place” is often attributed to Benjamin Franklin, but a more accurate quote appears to be “Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.” His actual quote is more complete and fits more closely to our definition of orderliness. A place and a time for everything. Routine. Tidiness.

On the other side, St. Francis de Sales cautions against extremes. Over-scheduling or over-organizing both can be enslaving – when the routine or the tidiness becomes the priority, and our “order” is not itself properly ordered to the love of God and neighbor. Chaos, on the other hand, leads to anxiety and worry. Orderliness supports simplicity, and simplicity supports orderliness. Each keeps us in the present moment, at peace, and properly ordered in our relationship with God and others.

We can develop orderliness by taking one step – committing to an action – like picking one thing to schedule and turn into a routine, or one thing in our surroundings to bring order to. There are plenty of techniques for doing this kind of thing. For example, consider “Atomic Habit” by James Clear, or “The life-changing magic of tidying up” by Marie Kondo.

*However*, a technique alone, or a technique without a proper purpose, is missing part of the value of orderliness. The purpose of orderliness is for our actions to be directed to loving God and neighbor. And seeking order for reasons other than loving God and neighbor can reinforce some other issue that is opposing yet a different value. Here is an example.

Imagine that your living space is a mess, and you are embarrassed by it, and because of that you do not invite friends or family over. Imagine you have negative thoughts about yourself because of it, like “I’m such a loser,” or “I’m a sloppy person, or “I’m not lovable.” Because of these negative thoughts and the emotions that come with them, you decide to work on cleaning up your place. But by doing so, you may actually reinforce those negative thoughts, especially if you experience even a minor setback. Even if you succeed in cleaning up your place, you may still think “I’m such a loser,” or “I’m a sloppy person, or “I’m not lovable” unless you get the reaction from other people that you are expecting. You are tying your opinion about yourself to the reactions of others. So, before working on an issue like this, look at your self-assessments for the topics in Workbook I, especially Holiness and Humility.

So, while you can start by some small, committed action, we suggest identifying an action for which the purpose is to enable you to be more free or more ordered in loving God or neighbor. In the process, it also is important to notice several things about your emotions, feelings, and thoughts. What thoughts about yourself arise when you think about your schedule or your surroundings? How do they make you feel? What happens when you make a change? Or when you do not meet your commitment one day?

One of the joys of heaven is that we will not need to be thinking about our orderliness then, as “God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, [for] the old order has passed away.” Rev. 21:3-4.

# Serenity

## **Definition**

St. Francis of Assisi's "serenity prayer" describes serenity as the ability to "accept the things I cannot change." In the movie, *Bridge of Spies*, the spy (Rudolf Abel) who is about to be turned over to his Russian counterparts is asked, "Are you not worried?". He responds, "Would it help?" In light of the serenity prayer, one might describe the spy's apparent calm as serenity, but it also could be mere stoic emotional detachment. Why does that matter? In times of suffering, injustice, or mystery, if our objective is our own internal tranquility, we disengage from relationships with others. If our actions are guided by love of God and neighbor, we engage. Said another way, the former seeks stillness of the emotions, while the latter seeks stillness of the soul and may require direct engagement in suffering both in action and in acceptance of discomforting sensations, emotions, and thoughts. **So, we define "serenity" as the quality of maintaining a stillness of soul out of trust in God when faced with suffering, injustice, or mystery.**

## **Scripture**

Psalm 46:11: "Be still and know that I am God!"

Philippians 4:6–7: "Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Psalm 131:2: "I have stilled my soul, like a weaned child to its mother, weaned is my soul."

Daniel 3:16-18, 21, 24: "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, 'There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, you should know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue which you set up.' ... They were bound and cast into the white-hot furnace with their trousers, shirts, hats and other garments.... They walked about in the flames, singing to God and blessing the Lord."

Acts 16:22-25: "[T]he magistrates had [Paul and Silas] stripped and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After inflicting many blows on them, they threw them into prison and instructed the jailer to guard them securely. When he received these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and secured their feet to a stake. About midnight, ... Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened".

## **Reflection**

Saying "Serenity Now" to calm oneself (see 159<sup>th</sup> episode of *Seinfeld*) might actually bottle up emotions, when stillness is not grounded in a trust in God.

But just mentioning God does not make it serenity either. The words of Psalm 46 (“*Be still and know that I am God.*”) are frequently used in meditations intended to lead someone to a sense of peace and calm. Peace and calm are not necessarily the same as a stillness of the soul. For this passage, the original Hebrew word has been translated into the English word “still”, while it is translated differently everywhere else. The Hebrew word generally means to leave slack, such as you would with a rope. In other words, the psalm does not read like a plea for internal peace, but instead of confidence in God’s presence and the “refuge and strength” (Ps 46:20) that comes with it. In fact, the refrain of the psalm is “The LORD of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob.” (Ps 46: 8, 12).

This combination of stillness, strength, and confidence in God’s presence also is reflected in the stories of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel, and Paul and Silas in Acts. Their serenity was not an emotional detachment from the moment but instead a confident peace in their soul that came with the trust that God is present in their distress and would give them strength.

How do we develop this quality in our actions? True serenity is a consequence of a deep trust in God, and is tested when we face suffering, injustice, or mystery. In some cases, we may first need to develop our trust in God, so that we are more prepared for those times we are tested. In situations where we are challenged, we can start to notice what level of trust we already have, by how well we imitate Paul and Silas, the three men in Daniel, and the Psalms, by praying and praising God.

## Thrift and Stewardship

### **Definition**

Like many of the other values we already discussed, the Catholic and secular meanings of “thrift” differs primarily in purpose. Being thrifty with our resources generally means we manage them well. We are not wasteful, do not squander them, and do not consume them excessively. We preserve them, take care of them, and maintain them. But to what end? So that we have more or don’t run out? So that we grow in wealth? As said before, Catholic theology has a deep sense of how everything should be *rightly ordered* first towards loving God, then to loving neighbor, then to loving self. There also is a deep sense that everything we have is a gift, whether physical, intellectual, or spiritual resources, or our time, our talents, our health, our relationships, our faith - and we are merely stewards. To steward our gifts towards God involves moderating desire to accumulate and to consume resources and using those resources for God. **So, we define “thrift” as the quality of treating all we have as a gift which we are entrusted to use responsibly in alignment with God’s will, to build His kingdom, to Love God and others.**

### **Scripture**

Genesis 41:34-36: Joseph advised, “Let Pharaoh act and appoint overseers for the land to organize it during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these coming good years, gathering the grain under Pharaoh’s authority, for food in the cities, and they should guard it. This food will serve as a reserve for the country against the seven years of famine that will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine.”

Luke 12:16-21: “There was a rich man whose land produced a bountiful harvest. He asked himself, ‘What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?’ And he said, ‘This is what I shall do: I shall tear down my barns and build larger ones. There I shall store all my grain and other goods and I shall say to myself, “Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?’ Thus will it be for the one who stores up treasure for himself but is not rich in what matters to God.”

Luke 16:10-13: “The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones; and the person who is dishonest in very small matters is also dishonest in great ones. If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth? If you are not trustworthy with what belongs to another, who will give you what is yours? No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

1 Peter 4:10: “As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

## **Reflection**

The contrast between Joseph's instruction to the Pharaoh in Genesis 41 and the actions of the rich man in Jesus' parable in Luke 16 illustrates how thrift involves a difference in *purpose*. The action of collecting and storing a harvest for future use is the same in both stories. But Joseph advised the gathering of the grain "as a reserve for the country against the seven years of famine that will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish in the famine." But the rich man said to *himself*, "Now as for you, you have so many good things stored up for many years, rest, eat, drink, be merry!"

This idea of stewardship is part of Catholic social teaching and found in the current Catechism of the Catholic Church (See CCC 2401-2406): "The ownership of any property makes its holder a steward of Providence, with the task of making it fruitful and communicating its benefits to others, first of all his family." (CCC 2404) Also, "Those who hold goods for use and consumption should use them with moderation, reserving the better part for guests, for the sick and the poor." (CCC 2405). The stewardship of other resources is similarly addressed (see CCC 1928-1942). Recognizing that these resources are not distributed equally, the Catechism reminds us that God "wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular 'talents' share the benefits with those who need them." (CCC 1937).

This value of "thrift" is focused on our recognition of what we have *as gifts* and of our role *as steward* – the *attitude* and *purpose* we bring to our resources generally. Note that some other values relate to how *well* we share our resources – the judgments we make in the moment as a steward. These are addressed in Workbook III.

What does this quality of behavior look like in practice and how do we start it? A good steward starts by taking an inventory. What are your gifts, or, with what have you been entrusted? Perhaps revisit the value of Gratitude in Workbook I. A good steward also knows the owner's intent. What is God's will for those gifts? Why were they entrusted *to you*? Pray. If it is God's will, generally, that you love God and your neighbor, how can what you have be used for love? Pray. A good steward plans or makes a budget to use what is given for the owner's intent. Schedule your time. Manage your money. Use your skills. Pray.

If that sounds too simplistic, it probably is. We all have a range of emotions or thoughts that affect whether we can bring "thrift" into our lives. So, as you try to do an inventory, or learn God's will, or make a plan, pay attention to what is going on internally. Discerning God's will for what we have isn't easy. It could be difficult to accept that what we have is a gift if we have spent our lives working hard to earn what we have. Or if we think we don't have much. It could be difficult to share with others, if we are really attached to what we have. Or, if we just don't like other people. We may need better skills in planning. We can become better stewards by noticing this internal struggle, since that noticing is an important step to enabling our wills to be exercised toward thrift, toward stewardship.

## Counsel and Prudence

### **Definition**

According to Catholic teaching, “Counsel” is one of the *Gifts* of the Holy Spirit. CCC 1831. The others we already discussed were Fear of the Lord, Piety, and Strength. Those are said to strengthen the will. The remaining four Gifts, including Counsel, enlighten the mind. In Workbook III we will discuss the other three: Knowledge, Understanding, and Wisdom. Counsel specifically is said to perfect prudence – our ability to regulate all aspects of our lives toward the singularly important end – loving God and neighbor. To act prudently involves deliberation, choice, and action. In the context of the Christian spiritual life, prudence mirrors the ACT framework of taking committed action at a choice point toward a value after proper deliberation, while managing our senses, emotions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and imaginations (our “passions”). **So, we define the value of “Prudence” as the quality of regulating all aspects of our lives through deliberation, choice and committed action directed toward loving God and neighbor while managing our passions.**

### **Scripture**

Exodus 10:24-26: “Pharaoh then summoned Moses and Aaron and said, ‘Go, serve the LORD. Only your flocks and herds will be detained. Even your little ones may go with you.’ But Moses replied, ‘You also must give us sacrifices and burnt offerings to make to the LORD, our God. Our livestock also must go with us. Not an animal must be left behind, for some of them we will select for service to the LORD, our God; but we will not know with which ones we are to serve the LORD until we arrive there.’”.

Isaiah 11:2-3: “The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, **a spirit of counsel** and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD, the principle spiritual gifts of the coming Messiah are prophesied.”

Psalms 32:8: “I will instruct you and show you the way you should walk, give you counsel with my eye upon you.”

Luke 14:28-30, 33: “Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? Otherwise, after laying the foundation and finding himself unable to finish the work the onlookers should laugh at him and say, ‘This one began to build but did not have the resources to finish.’ ... In the same way, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.”

Matthew 25:1-13: “Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones, when taking their lamps, brought no oil with them, but the wise brought flasks of oil with their lamps. Since the bridegroom was long delayed, they all became drowsy and

fell asleep. At midnight, there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise ones replied, ‘No, for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves.’ While they went off to buy it, the bridegroom came and those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him. Then the door was locked. Afterwards the other virgins came and said, ‘Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ But he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

### **Reflection**

All the preceding values in this Workbook II address the manner in which we organize all aspects of our lives – with hope, fortitude, courage, discipline, responsibility, perseverance, resilience, diligence, zeal, simplicity, orderliness, serenity, thrift, and stewardship – with the objective of loving God and neighbor. All these, plus prudence, are values which we can develop in any context, which makes them good values to work on before what follows next.

While this Workbook II is entitled “detachment,” the hard work of detaching ourselves from our desires, from things of this world, from pleasure, wealth, power, and honor, from avoiding pain and seeking comfort, comes next – the last two topics of this workbook. The values have been presented so far in a specific order - because it is likely more difficult to detach from something specific without general skills to support your effort. Said another way, the general skills make it easier to detach from something specific you’ve struggled with. For example, if you struggle with swearing, anger, food, or anything else, and also lack resilience, then *when you fail* (and you will) in that struggle, your lack of resilience may cause you to give up. So, if you know you need to work on resilience, then work on that generally before you need to rely upon it, specifically in another struggle. If you need to work on acting prudently, do it first in a part of your life without significant struggle, then rely on that ability when you work on the struggle of detachment.

What does prudence look like? For one, it aligns with the ACT framework described in the Handbook – using our intellect to make choices, take committed action, towards a desired value. St. Thomas Aquinas emphasized that the use of our intellect was not mere reason, however, but deliberation – which includes seeking counsel of others, and not just relying on ourselves, what we know, and what we think. Part of that counsel includes the purpose of our decision – our eternal end.

The scripture passages above exemplify focusing on our eternal end. In Luke, planning for the ultimate end is explained as working on detachment from possessions. The purpose of detachment is not to live stoically in this life, but to focus on the life to come. When that end comes, you can’t take it with you! In Matthew, the wise virgins prepared because they did not know *when* that end would come.

Developing prudence involves developing the ACT-based skills to first notice our situations so that we can then choose to deliberate before we choose to act. The act of deliberation, especially seeking counsel from others, helps us to unhook ourselves from our own thoughts and feelings. For one, talking with someone else introduces time between our noticing a situation and choosing to act. The other person's input also reduces our dependency on and attachment to our own thoughts.

With the gift of Counsel, the Holy Spirit works directly with our mind to provide supernatural counsel. But this is ***important***: relying on the gift of Counsel presumes that we know that we are hearing the Holy Spirit. And, this counsel will appear in our mind, as thoughts. We will need to discern between what we think is counsel from the Holy Spirit and our own thoughts. If we are still early in our development in our spiritual life, such discernment is hard. If we are still struggling with detachment (especially the next two topics) or other challenges in our spiritual life, it is likely that we could mistake our own thoughts for some kind of inspiration. Consider also, if you *know* that God is speaking to you, what does that imply about how promptly and generously you should act? As a matter of practice, it is unwise to act with the assumption we have counsel from the Holy Spirit. Prudence dictates that we consult with others about any such belief. That being said, as we practice prudence, and battle the spirit of this world through detachment – the values that come next – we will cultivate the gift of Counsel. As we learn to discern whether the Holy Spirit is providing us with counsel, we also learn what that voice sounds like. We can then “follow him because [we] recognize his voice.” (Jn. 10:4)

# Temperance | Restraint | Self-Control

## ***Definition***

There are two physical things that are necessary to human life – nourishment to sustain and preserve the self, and sex to sustain and preserve the race. Both are accompanied by pleasure, so that seeking the pleasure promotes preservation, or, seeking preservation is pleasurable. In fact, both are so pleasurable that humans occasionally engage in them primarily for the pleasure rather than for the preservation. If we are made to share in God’s blessed life, by loving God and loving neighbor, then actions motivated primarily by the pleasure obtained through them lead us away from loving God and neighbor because they become self-centered, on our pleasure. Temperance, or restraint or self-control, helps us manage the enjoyment of pleasure that accompanies the good from nourishment and sex that is necessary for survival against a desire for pleasure in itself which leads away from loving God and neighbor above self. Since our next topic relates to sexual temperance, with the themes of chastity, purity, and modesty, we will focus on temperance in the context of nourishment, very broadly interpreted as seeking any pleasure, wealth, honor, or power, or avoiding pain, suffering, or discomfort. **We define the value of “temperance” as the quality of aligning our attraction to pleasure with the motivation of loving God and neighbor above self.**

## ***Scripture***

1 Corinthians 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”

Galatians 5:22–23: “[T]he fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

2 Peter 1:5–7: “[M]ake every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with devotion, devotion with mutual affection, mutual affection with love.”

Romans 13:13–14: “[L]et us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.”

## ***Reflection***

Why is temperance so challenging? Precisely because pursuit of pleasure is necessary to survival but can lead away from loving God and others above the self. It is part of the problem faced by Adam and Eve: The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was “good for food” (i.e., good the physical), “pleasing to the eyes” (i.e., good for the sensual), and “desirable for gaining wisdom” (i.e., good for the intellectual), but these goods were not subordinated by Adam and Eve to the good of obeying God out of love for God.

When we focus on pleasure for its own sake, there are a multitude of consequences. Often, seeking the pleasure itself leads us to be incapable of doing what we are supposed to, or makes us capable of doing things we should not. Seeking pleasure for its own sake injures our souls by weakening, wearying, tormenting, blinding, and defiling them. It wears on our integrity, as our souls and will become slaves to the body. When grievous enough, we lose sanctifying grace. Therefore, for the sake of the health of our souls, among the values in this Workbook, temperance is where the rubber hits the road. Our strength in pursuing the other values will support, or hinder, our growth in temperance and the state of our souls.

Decisions in contexts requiring temperance are heavily influenced by our own senses, emotions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and imaginations. Therefore, to develop temperance, it also is important to work on skills for managing our attention – such as using tools from ACT – and then engage in committed action based on choice. Temperance requires us to be able to exercise the will independently, without being a slave to our bodies.

Precisely because aligning our attraction to pleasure with a motivation to love God is so difficult, and affects just about everyone on a daily basis, it also is important to work on temperance in the context of prudence – with deliberation, choice, and action. Such prudence complements and is enabled by the skills in the ACT toolkit. To develop temperance, it is especially important to seek counsel from others as part of our deliberation.

Yet another challenge to developing temperance is our own experience on the receiving end of others who have focused on their own pleasure at the expense of loving God and us. Often, we have difficult memories, thoughts about ourselves, and emotions that arise when faced with our own circumstances. These experiences are one of the reasons behind the assessments in each chapter. Your ability to remain emotionally balanced when these memories, thoughts, and emotions arise will impact on your ability to develop temperance or other values. Our hope is that by being sensitive to these issues, and helping you build your spiritual life with a good foundation, your journey will be easier.

Finally, part of a good foundation to help us develop temperance is the development of the values of Humility in Workbook I, especially gratitude, humility, and meekness. With gratitude, we learn to be thankful for all we have as a gift. With humility we learn our proper relationship with God, which helps us subordinate the desire for pleasure to the desire to love God. Finally, meekness helps us to be at peace with ourselves and not be angry in reaction to our own imperfections. Instead, like Jesus, we can calmly cleanse our temples.

## Chastity | Purity | Modesty

### *Definition*

Chastity is essentially temperance applied in the context of sexual desires. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines it from the perspective of integrity: “Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.” (See CCC 2337-2359). It notes that “either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.” (CCC 2339) Related concepts are purity and modesty, but these ideas are not limited to the domain of sexuality and could equally be applied in other domains managed by temperance. Purity relates to our intentions, imagination, and desires – to attuning “our intellects and wills to the demands of God's holiness,” specifically in regard to charity (the focus of Workbook III), chastity, and truth and faith (in Workbook I). Modesty relates to our appearance, behavior, and speech – “refusing to unveil what should remain hidden,” to protect the dignity and mystery of each person. (See CCC 2521-2522). Seeking purity and using modesty support chastity. So, **we define the value of “chastity” as the quality of aligning our attraction to sexual pleasure with the motivation of loving God and neighbor above self.**

### *Scripture*

Read Genesis 39 in its entirety (6-10): “Now Joseph was well-built and handsome. After a time, his master’s wife looked at him with longing and said, “Lie with me.” But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, as long as I am here, my master does not give a thought to anything in the house, but has entrusted to me all he owns. ... He has withheld from me nothing but you, since you are his wife. How, then, could I do this great wrong and sin against God?” Although she spoke to him day after day, he would not agree to lie with her, or even be near her.”

Read Daniel 13 in its entirety (19-23): “[T]wo old men got up and ran to [Susanna]. ‘Look,’ they said, ‘the garden doors are shut, no one can see us, and we want you. So give in to our desire, and lie with us. If you refuse, we will testify against you that a young man was here with you and that is why you sent your maids away.’ ‘I am completely trapped,’ Susanna groaned. ‘If I yield, it will be my death; if I refuse, I cannot escape your power. Yet it is better for me not to do it and to fall into your power than to sin before the Lord.’”

Luke 1:26–28, 31, 34-35, 38: “[T]he angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, ‘Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. ... Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.’ ... But Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?’ And the angel said to her in reply, ‘The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.’”

... Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her."

Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25: "When...Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' ... When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus."

1 Corinthians 6:13, 15, 17-20: "The body, however, is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body ... Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Avoid immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the immoral person sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body."

Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

### **Reflection**

The notes in the online USCCB's New American Bible, revised edition, to verses 12-13 of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 6, says that the Corinthians "consider sexual satisfaction a matter as indifferent as food, and they attribute no lasting significance to bodily functions." They had an expression, "Everything is lawful for me." 1 Cor 6:12.

Our modern secular world has a similar, subjective perspective. Debates of whether certain actions are morally right or wrong become a battle between "your truth" or "my truth." Questions related to managing sexual desires are dismissed as old-fashioned, unrealistic, restrictive, repressive, or even oppressive and tyrannical. We get bogged down by questions like, "What if ...?" or "If two people love each other and consent ...?"

St. Paul responded to the Corinthians, "But not all things are beneficial" and "but I will not let myself be dominated by anything." 1 Cor 6:12. Seeking chastity starts with exercising our wills over our senses, emotions, feelings, memories, thoughts, and imaginations - everything forming our desires. Seeking chastity starts by not letting our wills be dominated by anything - by deciding what part of you is in charge, calling the shots, free. Is your will free and desires subject to it, or are your desires free and your will subject to them? At the core of chastity is this basic question of integration.

The next question is, “To what should our will be exercised?” If not to our desires, then to the needs of our soul, the health of which depends on loving God and neighbor above self. The soul, for its health, depends on our reason to consider our humility before God, and His desire for our holiness, and the dignity, respect, and charity owed to others.

Developing chastity begins, like all of the other values, by noticing our senses, emotions, feelings, thoughts, memories, and imaginations, accepting what they are but not allowing them to control our will. Developing such skills outside the context of chastity can help strengthen those skills, so that they can be more effectively used within the context of chastity.

Also, as a matter of prudence, it is also helpful to seek counsel beforehand, to be prepared for situations that might arise based on our stations in life. As shown by the stories of Joseph in Genesis, chapter 39, and Susannah, in Daniel, Chapter 13, decisions affecting chastity can be challenging in the moment because we usually are with another person, whose will may be overcome by desire. Also, relying on prudential decision making with respect to chastity, with full deliberation for the health of our souls out of love of God and neighbor, is not a strength of human beings in the moment.

As a final word, the assessment is an important tool to determine whether you are ready to work on chastity as a value. While many spiritual advisors emphasize the need for detachment, and thus emphasize developing temperance and chastity, others failures in this regard that have injured us often are at the root of our own issues. Without developing skills, and without developing and healing our relationships with God (Workbook I) or with ourselves (Workbook II) first, our spiritual growth likely will be difficult if we try to tackle temperance and chastity first.