

SUMMARY:

“Spiritual Gluttony and the Sacrament of Confession”

https://chatgpt.com/s/t_68fc41727b7081918df3a21d30a65933

Overview

The document explores *spiritual gluttony* — the excessive craving for emotional or sensory sweetness in spiritual life — and how it distorts one’s participation in the Sacrament of Confession. Drawing mainly from St. John of the Cross, Thomas Aquinas, John Cassian, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it presents both the dangers and the remedies for this subtle vice.

1. What Is Spiritual Gluttony

Definition: A disordered pursuit of spiritual pleasures — wanting to “feel” or “taste” God — instead of seeking purity, humility, and God’s will.

Symptoms:

- Craving consolations in prayer or Communion.
- Overdoing penances or devotions for emotional reward.
- Preferring self-chosen practices over obedience or counsel.
- Neglecting moderation and true self-examination.

2. Relation to Confession

- Confession becomes self-focused when the penitent seeks emotional relief rather than sincere conversion.

Common distortions:

- *Careless confessions* — done hastily to feel worthy for Communion.
- *Frequent Communion without preparation* — motivated by desire for “sweetness.”
- *Neglect of self-examination* — ignoring deeper sins.
- *Disobedience to the confessor* — trusting one’s feelings over direction.

- **Result:** A shallow, self-pleasing spirituality lacking true repentance and amendment of life.

3. Effects of Spiritual Gluttony

- Diminished intellect and discernment — senses rule over reason.
- Hindered contemplation — pleasure distracts from genuine union with God.
- Disordered affections — laziness, sensuality, and moral instability.
- Unfulfilled thirst — seeking ever-new experiences yet remaining unsatisfied.
- **Moral peril** — opens the soul to pride, sloth, and loss of charity.

4. Remedies and Virtues to Cultivate

Practical remedies:

- Temperance and moderation in prayer, fasting, and devotions.
- Humility and obedience to a confessor or spiritual director.
- Charity — serving others instead of seeking self-pleasure.
- Renunciation and mortification — learning contentment in “aridity.”

- Study of Scripture and contemplation grounded in truth, not emotion.

Core virtues:

Temperance, humility, obedience, charity, prudence, fortitude, patience, meekness, and diligence.

5. Church Teaching on Confession

• **Confession restores grace and reconciles us with God and the Church.**

- ✧ Essential elements: repentance, disclosure of sins, intent to make reparation, and priestly absolution (CCC 1422–1491).
- ✧ It must be approached with humility, prudence, contrition, obedience, and love of God, not as a ritual for self-comfort.
- ✧ True reconciliation yields *peace, serenity, and spiritual resurrection*.

6. Ministering to the Spiritually Gluttonous

Pastoral guidance involves:

- Teaching moderation and discretion.
- Encouraging acceptance of spiritual dryness.
- Guiding prayer focused on fidelity rather than feelings.
- Promoting community accountability and patience.
- Addressing related vices such as pride, sloth, and avarice.

7. Theological and Moral Context

- **Gluttony**(bodily or spiritual) is one of the seven capital sins, opposed by the virtue of temperance.
- **Persistent indulgence** — bodily or spiritual — can become mortal sin if gravely excessive.
- **True holiness** lies in surrender, not self-gratification: to seek God for His own sake, even in darkness.

8. Key Takeaway

- Spiritual gluttony replaces love of God with love of His gifts.
- The cure lies in humility, temperance, and obedience — embracing the “dark night” where faith matures, and consolation gives way to communion.



“Spiritual Gluttony and the Sacrament of Confession”

Following is the full text for a deeper understanding.

Spiritual Gluttony and its Relation to Confession

<https://www.magisterium.com/s/c-392d931b-fd09-4835-bc1c-5bf5acf06c9d>

Spiritual gluttony, as described by St. John of the Cross, refers to the excessive pursuit of sweetness and pleasure in spiritual exercises, rather than seeking spiritual purity and discretion [1] [10]. This can manifest in various ways, particularly concerning the Sacrament of Confession.

PART 1

Here's a breakdown of spiritual gluttony and its relation to confession:

Understanding Spiritual Gluttony

- **Seeking Sensible Sweetness:** Spiritual gluttony involves seeking to “feel and taste God” in a palpable way, not only in Communion but in all acts of devotion [17].
- **Imperfection:** St. John of the Cross identifies this as a significant imperfection that can lead to great evils [17].
- **Extremes:** Those with spiritual gluttony may go to extremes, exceeding the limits of moderation in their spiritual practices [1] [10]. They may harm themselves through excessive penances or fasts, disregarding advice and obedience [1] [10].
- **Inordinate Love of Sweetness:** It arises from an unrestrained desire for spiritual sweetness, causing individuals to prioritize the pleasure derived from spiritual exercises over genuine spiritual growth [3] [12].

Manifestations in Relation to Confession

- **Insisting on Frequent Communion:** Individuals may insist on frequent Communion, driven by a desire for the sensible sweetness they experience, rather than a genuine sense of their own unworthiness and the reverence due to God [14].
- **Careless Confessions:** The eagerness to receive Communion frequently can lead to making confessions carelessly, prioritizing the act of eating over the cleanliness and perfection of their confession [14]. They become more focused on the reception of the sacrament than on genuine repentance and amendment of life [14].
- **Disregarding Counsel:** Some may even dare to communicate without the permission of their confessor, relying on their own judgment and concealing the truth [14]. This boldness is considered harmful and potentially punishable [14].
- **Delaying Confession:** Ironically, seeking spiritual highs can also manifest as delaying confession. Thomas Aquinas notes that delaying confession for spiritual disease is more dangerous than delaying medical attention for physical disease [15]. Similarly, Thomas a Kempis notes that too much carefulness or anxiety can hinder someone from devotion [16]. He recommends following the counsel of wise men and laying aside anxiety and scruples, because it hinders the grace of God and destroys devotion of mind [16].

Avoiding Spiritual Gluttony

- **Prioritize Purity and Discretion:** Focus on spiritual purity and discretion rather than seeking sweetness in spiritual exercises [1] [10].
- **Embrace Aridity:** Recognize that God may restrain concupiscence and curb desire, leading to a period of aridity and darkness in which the soul cannot feed on pleasure or sweetness [3] [12]. This is a necessary part of spiritual growth [3] [12].
- **Spiritual Sobriety:** When desire and concupiscence are quenched, the soul can live in spiritual tranquility and peace [3] [12].
- **Humble Resignation:** Adopt an attitude of humble resignation, accepting the guidance of one's confessor and the Church [14].
- **Self-Examination:** Regularly examine your motivations and passions to identify any attachments that may be hindering your spiritual life [13].

Broader Context of Gluttony

- **Gluttony and Other Vices:** John Cassian explains that overcoming gluttony is essential for battling other faults like fornication, covetousness, anger, dejection and pride [2] [11].
- **Checking Incentives:** Cassian also notes that the spirit of gluttony cannot be entirely eliminated but its incentives and superfluous appetites can be held down by the power of the mind [5].
- **Harm to the Soul:** The Holy Fathers taught that food consumed in excess harms the soul, and that a lack of self-control in eating and drinking leads to voraciousness in everything else [18].

In summary, spiritual gluttony is a subtle but dangerous inclination to seek excessive pleasure and sweetness in spiritual practices, including the Sacrament of Confession. It can lead to carelessness, disobedience, and a distorted view of God and oneself. Overcoming this requires a focus on spiritual purity, humility, and acceptance of God's will, even when it involves dryness and a lack of sensible consolation.

[1] Juan de Yepes y Álvarez (St. John of the Cross), *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book 1, Chapter 6.1 - "Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony," chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Delany, Joseph. "Gluttony." *The Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06590a.htm>.

[4] *Op. Cit., The Dark Night of the Soul* Book I, Chapter 13.3, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf

[5] Ibid.

[6] *Op. Cit., The Dark Night of the Soul* Book I, Chapter 6.4, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[7] Thomas Aquinas, “Miscellaneous Questions (*Quaestiones quodlibetales*) I q. 6 a. 2 s.c.,” 1272, tr. Sandra Edwards, “Quodlibetal Questions 1 and 2,” Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1983, <https://pims.ca/publication/isbn-978-0-88844-276-5/>.

[8] Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, “The Fourth Book Of The Sacrament Of The Altar - Chapter X - That Holy Communion is not lightly to be omitted - The Voice of the Beloved,” 1427 AD, Translated by Rev. William Benham (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1886) <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1653>.

[9] Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, “Part V, Chapter VII,” 1609 AD, https://ccel.org/ccel/desales/devout_life/devout_life.vii.vii.html.

[10] John Cassian, *Conference 5. Conference of Abbot Serapion, On the Eight Principal Faults*, Chapter 26, “How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues,” Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350805.htm>.

[11] John Cassian, *Conference 5. Conference of Abbot Serapion. On the Eight Principal Faults*, Chapter 26, “How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues,” 420-429 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350805.htm>.

[12] Delany, Joseph. “Gluttony,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06590a.htm>.

[13] Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church: Christ – Our Pascha*, “759, Gluttony and Its Opposite Virtue — Temperance,” 2016 AD, https://eeparchy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Christ-our-Pascha-Catechism-of-the-Ukrainian-Catholic-Church-by-Comission-for-the-Catehism-z-lib.org_.pdf.

+++++

What Are the Effects of Spiritual Gluttony?

Spiritual gluttony, the excessive and disordered pursuit of pleasure in spiritual exercises, has several detrimental effects on one’s spiritual life. These effects can hinder genuine

spiritual growth and lead to various spiritual and moral pitfalls.

Diminished Intellect and Increased Sensuality

- **Clouded Judgment:** According to Thomas Aquinas, vices like gluttony and lust fix a person's attention on corporeal things, weakening their ability to understand intelligible things [3]. Lust, being more vehement, can lead to blindness of mind, severely limiting the knowledge of spiritual matters, while gluttony results in a dulled sense, making one weak in understanding spiritual truths [3].
- **Subjection to Sensible Things:** Aquinas explains that when the light of wisdom diminishes due to a will not submitted to God, people subject their affections to sensible things, leading them away from God and into sin [1]. This can also make them vulnerable to unclean spirits and various sins, further corrupting them and distancing them from spiritual and divine goods [1].

Hindrance to True Contemplation and Happiness

- **Obstacle to Contemplation:** Aquinas states that bodily pleasures hinder a person's close approach to God, as God is approached through contemplation, which these pleasures impede [2].
- **False Sense of Happiness:** Placing happiness in bodily pleasures, as the Epicureans did, or in the pleasures of the belly, as the followers of Cerinthus and the Saracens believed, is a misguided pursuit that detracts from true happiness [2]. True happiness is found in approaching God, not in sensory indulgence [2].

Disordered Affections and Actions

- **Inordinate Stirrings of Appetite:** Original sin and the fall from grace led to inordinate stirrings of the lower appetite, causing people to subject their affections to sensible things and wander far from God [1].
- **Laziness and Neglect:** Overindulgence in pleasures can lead to dissoluteness, laziness, and neglect of necessary duties, as people become wholly devoted to the quest for pleasure [6]. This can result in poverty and a willingness to resort to immoral means to maintain their accustomed pleasures [6].

Spiritual and Moral Dangers

- **Wandering After Unlawful Things:** Sloth, which arises from sorrow over spiritual goods, can lead to "wandering after unlawful things," as people seek external objects of pleasure to compensate for their lack of spiritual joy [8].
- **Malice and Spite:** Sloth can also manifest as spite towards those who lead others to spiritual goods and even as malice, a detestation of spiritual goods themselves [8].
- **Sinful Inclinations:** Thoughts concerning carnal gratification are particularly powerful in inclining one towards sin, as concupiscence is innate and grows from youth [5]. Dallying with such thoughts incites lust, making it necessary to flee from fornication, as it can be overcome in no other way [5].

Thirst Without Satisfaction

- **Insatiable Desire:** While a faint perception of divine knowledge brings delight and sets up a thirst for perfect knowledge, bodily pleasures become distasteful due to their excess, leading to weariness and a desire for something else [4]. Spiritual pleasures, on the other hand, do not exceed the natural mode of being but perfect nature, offering the greatest delight when their point of perfection is reached [4].
- **Unfulfilled Desires:** In the pursuit of pleasurable enjoyments, people may become intemperate and incontinent, but true happiness and perfect delight are found in the vision of God, which is more perfect than any sensible good and free from sadness or harassing solicitude [9].

In summary, the effects of spiritual gluttony include diminished intellect, hindered contemplation, disordered affections, spiritual and moral dangers, and an insatiable desire that cannot be fulfilled by sensory pleasures. It leads one away from God and true happiness, emphasizing the importance of moderation, spiritual purity, and a focus on divine knowledge and love.



[1] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 15, A. 3, 1274 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3015.htm#article3>.

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology (Compendium Theologiae)*, Part I - Chapter 194, "Original justice and the fall - On other defects that followed in intellect and will," <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/Compendium.htm#194>.

[3] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III - Chapter 27 - "That the Happiness of Man does not consist in Bodily Pleasures," 1265 AD, <https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles3a.htm#27>.

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno (On Kingship)*, Chapter 8, "That the city should have a pleasant site," <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~DeRegno.BookII.C8>.

[5] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, Q. 35, A. 4, "Whether sloth should be accounted a capital vice?", 1274 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3035.htm#article4>.

[6] Thomas Aquinas, "The Perfection of the Spiritual Life" (*Liber de perfectione spiritualis vitae*), 1270 AD, Chapter 9 - "Aids to the Preservation of Chastity," <https://isidore.co/aquinas/PerfectVitaeSpir.htm#9>.

[7] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, Q. 33, A. 2, "Of the Effects of Pleasure - Whether pleasure causes thirst or desire for itself?", 1274 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/2033.htm#article2>.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, Chapter 63, "How in that Final Happiness every Desire of Man is fulfilled," 1265 AD, <https://isidore.co/aquinas/ContraGentiles3a.htm#63>.

+++++

What Are Some Practical Remedies?

To counteract the negative effects of spiritual gluttony, several practical remedies can be employed. These remedies focus on cultivating virtues, practicing moderation, and redirecting one's focus towards genuine spiritual growth and detachment from excessive sensory or emotional gratification in spiritual exercises.

Cultivating Virtues

- **Temperance and Moderation:** Practice temperance in all aspects of life, including spiritual exercises [1] [2]. Avoid extremes and seek a balanced approach to prayer, fasting, and other devotional practices [1] [2].
- **Humility:** Cultivate humility by recognizing one's dependence on God and acknowledging one's imperfections [3]. This helps to avoid pride and the temptation to seek spiritual experiences for personal gratification [3].
- **Obedience:** Follow the guidance of a spiritual director or confessor [4]. Obedience helps to ensure that one's spiritual practices are aligned with Church teaching and are not driven by selfish desires [4].
- **Charity:** Focus on serving others and practicing acts of charity [5]. This redirects attention away from oneself and towards the needs of others, fostering a spirit of selflessness and love [5].

Practicing Detachment

- **Renunciation:** Practice renunciation by detaching from worldly possessions and pleasures [6]. This helps to purify the heart and create space for God [6].
- **Mortification:** Embrace small acts of mortification, such as abstaining from certain foods or activities, to strengthen the will and develop self-control [7].
- **Acceptance of Aridity:** Accept periods of spiritual dryness or aridity as opportunities for growth [8]. Recognize that God may withdraw consolations to test one's love and purify one's intentions [8].
- **Focus on Intention:** Focus on the intention behind spiritual practices rather than the feelings they evoke [9]. Strive to love God for His own sake, not for the sake of the pleasure or satisfaction one derives from spiritual exercises [9].

Redirecting Focus

- **Study of Scripture and Theology:** Engage in regular study of Scripture and theology to deepen one's understanding of God and His will [10]. This helps to ground one's spiritual life in truth and avoid being led astray by emotions or subjective experiences [10].

- **Contemplative Prayer:** Practice contemplative prayer, which involves resting in God's presence and allowing Him to lead. This helps to cultivate a deeper relationship with God that is not dependent on sensory experiences.
- **Discernment of Spirits:** Learn to discern the movements of the Holy Spirit and the temptations of the evil spirit. This helps to distinguish between genuine spiritual experiences and those that are driven by selfish desires or illusions.
- **Frequent Confession:** Regularly confess one's sins and seek guidance from a confessor. This helps to purify the conscience and receive the grace needed to overcome spiritual gluttony.

Additional Considerations

- **Self-Awareness:** Develop self-awareness by examining one's motivations and desires. This helps to identify any tendencies towards spiritual gluttony and take steps to correct them.
- **Patience:** Be patient with oneself and recognize that spiritual growth is a gradual process. Avoid discouragement and continue to strive for holiness, trusting in God's grace.
- **Community Support:** Seek support from a community of faith. Sharing one's struggles with others can provide encouragement and accountability.

By consistently applying these practical remedies, individuals can overcome spiritual gluttony and cultivate a more authentic and mature spiritual life, rooted in love, humility, and a genuine desire for God's will.



[1] John Cassian, *Conference 5. Conference of Abbot Serapion, On the Eight Principal Faults*, Chapter 26, "How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues," Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350805.htm>.

[2] John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Moses*, 420-429 AD, Chapter 16, "How to seek for discretion", Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350802.htm>.

[3] John Cassian, *Institutes*, Book V Chapter 14, "How gluttonous desires can be overcome," 420 AD, Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.), <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350705.htm>.

[4] *Ibid.*, Book V Chapter 10, "That abstinence from food is not of itself sufficient for preservation of bodily and mental purity".

[5] Augustine of Hippo, *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, “Chapter 19, 35, “Description of the Duties of Temperance, According to the Sacred Scriptures,” 388 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1401.htm>.

[6] *Op. Cit., Institutes*, Book V, Chapter 9, “Of the measure of the chastisement to be undertaken, and the remedy of fasting.”

[7] *Ibid., Institutes*, Book V, Chapter 8 “How food should be taken with regard to the aim at perfect continence.”

[8] Synod of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church: Christ – Our Pascha*, 2016, §760 “The Eight Capital Sins⁴ and Their Opposite Virtues - a. Gluttony and Its Opposite Virtue—Temperance,” https://eeparchy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Christ-our-Pascha-Catechism-of-the-Ukrainian-Catholic-Church-by-Comission-for-the-Catehism-z-lib.org_.pdf.

[9] Pope Francis, *General Audience of 17 April 2024* - “Cycle of Catechesis. Vices and Virtues. 15. Temperance” April 17, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2024/documents/20240417-udi-enza-generale.html>.

[10] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2530 “The struggle against carnal lust involves purifying the heart and practicing temperance.” 1992, https://www.vatican.va/content/catechism/en/part_three/section_two/chapter_two/article_9/in_brief.html.

+++++

What Are the Virtues to Cultivate?

To counteract spiritual gluttony, cultivating specific virtues is essential for fostering a balanced and authentic spiritual life. These virtues help to redirect one’s focus from seeking excessive pleasure in spiritual practices to pursuing genuine spiritual growth and union with God.

Core Virtues to Cultivate

Temperance:

- **Definition:** Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods [9]. It ensures the will’s mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable [9].
- **Application:** Practice moderation in all aspects of life, including spiritual exercises. Avoid extremes in prayer, fasting, and other devotional practices [9].

Humility:

- **Definition:** Humility is the virtue by which a person recognizes their own limitations and dependence on God [3]. It is the opposite of pride and arrogance.
- **Application:** Acknowledge your dependence on God and recognize your imperfections. Avoid pride and the temptation to seek spiritual experiences for personal gratification [3].

Obedience:

- **Definition:** Obedience is the virtue by which a person submits their will to legitimate authority, such as God, the Church, or a spiritual director [4].
- **Application:** Follow the guidance of a spiritual director or confessor. Obedience helps ensure that your spiritual practices are aligned with Church teaching and are not driven by selfish desires [4].

Charity:

- **Definition:** Charity is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God [5].
- **Application:** Focus on serving others and practicing acts of charity. This redirects attention away from oneself and towards the needs of others, fostering a spirit of selflessness and love [5].

Related Virtues**Fortitude:**

- **Definition:** Fortitude is the virtue that enables one to face difficulties and dangers with courage and perseverance.
- **Application:** Develop the strength to resist temptations and persevere in spiritual practices, even when they are difficult or unrewarding.

Patience:

- **Definition:** Patience is the virtue that enables one to endure suffering and hardship with calmness and composure.
- **Application:** Be patient with yourself and recognize that spiritual growth is a gradual process. Avoid discouragement and continue to strive for holiness, trusting in God's grace.

Meekness:

- **Definition:** Meekness is the virtue that moderates anger and promotes gentleness and kindness.
- **Application:** Cultivate a gentle and compassionate attitude towards others and towards yourself. Avoid harshness and self-condemnation.

Prudence:

- **Definition:** Prudence is the virtue that enables one to make sound judgments and decisions based on reason and wisdom.
- **Application:** Exercise discernment in spiritual matters and seek wise counsel when making important decisions. Avoid impulsiveness and rashness.

Additional Virtues

- **Renunciation:** Practice renunciation by detaching from worldly possessions and pleasures [6]. This helps to purify the heart and create space for God [6].
- **Mortification:** Embrace small acts of mortification, such as abstaining from certain foods or activities, to strengthen the will and develop self-control [7].
- **Diligence:** Be diligent in pursuing spiritual growth and fulfilling your duties. Avoid sloth and laziness, which can lead to spiritual stagnation.

By actively cultivating these virtues, individuals can overcome spiritual gluttony and

develop a more balanced, authentic, and fruitful spiritual life, centered on love for God and service to others.



[1] Waldron, Martin Augustine, “Virtue,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm>.

[2] Ambrose of Milan, *On the Duties of the Clergy*, Bk. I, Chapter 43, 219 “On temperance and its chief parts, especially tranquillity of mind and moderation, care for what is virtuous, and reflection on what is seemly.” 391 AD, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34011.htm>.

[3] [Delany, Joseph, “Temperance,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 14. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14481a.htm>.

[4] Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*. Book I - Chapter 18, “He Illustrates the Apostle’s Saying, I Will Destroy the Wisdom of the Wise.” 205 AD, Translated by William Wilson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885,) <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02101.htm>.

[5] Pope Francis, *General Audience of 17 April 2024* - “Cycle of Catechesis. Vices and Virtues. 15. Temperance,” April, 17, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2024/documents/20240417-udi-enza-generale.html>

[6] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2341, “The Vocation to Chastity,” 1992 AD, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P85.HTM.



PART 2

Spiritual Gluttony and the Sacrament of Confession — 2

<https://www.magisterium.com/s/c-587a2cb1-1bda-40b5-9e6f-6f944465b756>

Spiritual gluttony, as it relates to the Sacrament of Confession, involves an inordinate desire for the consolations and sweetness found in spiritual practices, rather than pursuing genuine spiritual growth and purity [9]. This can manifest in several ways, distorting the true purpose of confession.

Here’s a breakdown of spiritual gluttony and its connection to confession:

Understanding Spiritual Gluttony

Spiritual gluttony is characterized by seeking spiritual pleasure for its own sake, rather than as a means to draw closer to God and grow in virtue [9]. St. John of the Cross notes that beginners in the spiritual life are particularly susceptible to this, as they are often drawn to the sweetness and pleasure found in spiritual exercises [9] [15].

Manifestations in Confession

- 1. Seeking Consolation over Conversion:** A person struggling with spiritual gluttony might approach confession primarily to experience the emotional relief and sense of forgiveness, rather than with a firm purpose of amendment and a commitment to change their behavior. The focus is on the feeling of being absolved, rather than a genuine turning away from sin.
- 2. Careless Confessions:** The desire to frequently receive the Eucharist due to spiritual gluttony can lead to making confessions carelessly [18]. The individual may become more eager to receive Communion than to confess their sins thoroughly and with a contrite heart [18]. This undermines the purpose of confession, which requires a diligent self-examination and honest disclosure of sins [14].
- 3. Insisting on Frequent Communion:** Individuals may insist on frequent Communion, driven by a desire for spiritual sweetness, sometimes even going against the advice of their confessors [18]. They may prioritize the feeling of closeness to God received during Communion over the necessary preparation and disposition of soul, potentially making careless confessions to ensure they are allowed to receive [18].
- 4. Neglecting Self-Examination:** Spiritual gluttony can lead to a superficial examination of conscience, focusing on minor imperfections while overlooking deeper issues that need to be addressed [14]. The individual may not want to delve into painful or difficult areas, preferring to maintain a pleasant spiritual experience.
- 5. Avoiding Obedience:** Those struggling with spiritual gluttony might avoid seeking guidance from spiritual directors or confessors, or even disregard their advice, in order to pursue their own desires for spiritual experiences [9] [15]. They may prioritize their personal feelings and preferences over the wisdom and direction of those appointed to guide them.

Dangers of Spiritual Gluttony

- **Distorted Priorities:** It can lead to prioritizing feelings of spiritual satisfaction over genuine growth in virtue and holiness [9] [15].
- **Superficiality:** It can result in a shallow spiritual life, lacking depth and substance, as the focus is on immediate gratification rather than long-term transformation.
- **Disobedience:** It can foster a spirit of independence and disobedience, as the individual trusts their own feelings and desires more than the guidance of the Church and its ministers [9] [15].

What Are the Virtues to Cultivate?

- 1. Seek Purity and Discretion:** Strive for spiritual purity and discretion rather than spiritual sweetness [9] [15].
- 2. Embrace the Dark Night:** Accept periods of spiritual dryness and aridity as opportunities for growth and purification [11] [17].

3. Practice Obedience: Submit to the guidance of a spiritual director or confessor, trusting in their wisdom and discernment [9] [15].

4. Focus on Virtue: Concentrate on cultivating virtue and overcoming vices, rather than seeking emotional highs [10] [16].

5. Examine Your Motives: Regularly examine your motives for engaging in spiritual practices, ensuring that your primary goal is to love and serve God, rather than to experience personal satisfaction.

6. Cultivate Humility: Recognize your own unworthiness and dependence on God's grace, avoiding the temptation to think too highly of your own spiritual progress [18] [19].

By recognizing the signs of spiritual gluttony and taking steps to overcome it, you can approach the Sacrament of Confession with a sincere desire for conversion and a commitment to living a life of holiness.

In summary, spiritual gluttony in the context of confession involves seeking the emotional gratification of the sacrament without a genuine commitment to repentance and amendment of life. This can manifest as careless confessions, insistence on frequent communion, and a neglect of true self-examination, ultimately hindering spiritual growth. Overcoming this requires a focus on virtue, obedience, and a sincere desire for holiness rather than mere emotional satisfaction.



[1] Libreria Editrice Vaticana *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1992 AD, §1455, “The confession of sins,” https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4D.HTM.

[2] Juan de Yepes y Álvarez (St. John of the Cross), *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book 1, Chapter 6.1 - “Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony,” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[3] *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.4, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[4] *Ibid.*, Chapter 13.3 chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[5] *Op. Cit.*, CCC, §1456.

[6] *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 13.3.

[7] *Op. Cit.*, CCC, §1453.

[8] John Cassian, *Conference 5. Conference of Abbot Serapion, On the Eight Principal Faults*, Chapter 26, “How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues,” Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350805.htm>.

[9] *Op. Cit.*, Chapter 13.7.

+++++

Can You Provide a Church Teaching?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses the Sacrament of Penance, also known as the Sacrament of Confession or Reconciliation, which is directly relevant to the topic of spiritual gluttony. Here are some key teachings:

Nature of the Sacrament

- **Sacrament of Forgiveness:** The Catechism states that the sacrament of Penance is a particular sacrament through which the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is conferred [5]. It is also called the sacrament of conversion, confession, penance, or reconciliation [5].
- **Reconciliation with God and the Church:** Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offenses committed against Him [4]. Simultaneously, they are reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins [4]. The Church, through charity, example, and prayer, labors for their conversion [4].
- **Necessity of the Sacrament:** Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of His Church, especially for those who have fallen into grave sin after Baptism, losing their baptismal grace and wounding ecclesial communion [3]. This sacrament offers a new possibility to convert and recover the grace of justification [3]. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as “the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace” [3].
- **Essential Elements:** The sacrament of Penance consists of three actions of the penitent: repentance, confession (disclosure of sins to the priest), and the intention to make reparation and do works of reparation [2]. The priest’s absolution is also an essential part of the sacrament [2].

Effects of the Sacrament

- **Restoration to God’s Grace:** The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with Him in an intimate friendship [8]. Reconciliation with God is the purpose and effect of this sacrament [8].
- **Peace and Serenity:** For those who receive the sacrament with a contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation is usually followed by peace and serenity of

conscience, along with strong spiritual consolation [8]. This sacrament brings about a true “spiritual resurrection” and restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, the most precious of which is friendship with God [8].

- **Reconciliation with the Church and Others:** This sacrament reconciles us with the Church, repairing or restoring the fraternal communion damaged or broken by sin [9]. It heals the individual and revitalizes the life of the Church [9]. Reconciliation with God leads to other reconciliations, repairing breaches caused by sin, including reconciliation with oneself, one’s brethren, and all of creation [9].

Celebration of the Sacrament

- **Liturgical Action:** Like all sacraments, Penance is a liturgical action [7]. The elements of the celebration include a greeting and blessing from the priest, reading the Word of God, an exhortation to repentance, confession of sins, imposition and acceptance of a penance, the priest’s absolution, and a prayer of thanksgiving and praise [7].
- **Communal Celebration:** The sacrament of Penance can also take place in a communal celebration, which includes preparation for confession and thanksgiving for forgiveness received [10]. The personal confession of sins and individual absolution are inserted into a liturgy of the Word of God, with readings, a homily, an examination of conscience conducted in common, a communal request for forgiveness, the Our Father, and a thanksgiving in common [10]. This communal celebration expresses more clearly the ecclesial character of penance [10].

Penance as a “Laborious Kind of Baptism”

- **Second Plank of Salvation:** Penance has been rightly called by the holy Fathers “a laborious kind of baptism” [1]. This sacrament is necessary for salvation for those who have fallen after Baptism, just as Baptism is necessary for salvation for those who have not yet been reborn [1].

These teachings emphasize that the Sacrament of Penance is not merely a ritual for obtaining forgiveness, but a profound means of reconciliation with God and the Church, requiring genuine repentance, confession, and a commitment to reparation. It is through this sacrament that the baptized can recover grace and restore their relationship with God.



[1] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1486, 1992 AD, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4I.HTM.

[2] CCC 1422, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P46.HTM.

[3] CCC 1446, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4C.HTM.

[4] CCC 1491, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4I.HTM.

[5] CCC 1468, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4F.HTM.

[6] *Ibid.*, CCC 1469.

[7] CCC 1480, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P4H.HTM.

[8] *Ibid.*, CCC 1482.

[9] CCC 980, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P2E.HTM.

+++++

What Virtues Are Needed

To approach the Sacrament of Confession with the proper disposition and avoid spiritual pitfalls like spiritual gluttony, several virtues are essential. These virtues help ensure that the sacrament is received with sincerity, humility, and a genuine desire for spiritual growth.

Key Virtues for Worthy Confession

1. Prudence:

- **Definition:** Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.
- **Application to Confession:** Prudence is needed for a discreet confession, giving appropriate weight to different sins. It involves thoughtfully examining one's conscience to understand the nature and gravity of one's sins.

2. Voluntariness:

- **Definition:** This refers to the quality of acting on one's own free will, without coercion or external pressure.
- **Application to Confession:** Confession should be voluntary, arising from a genuine desire to be reconciled with God. It should not be forced or done out of mere obligation.

3. Purity of Intention:

- **Definition:** Purity of intention means acting with a right and sincere purpose, directed towards God's will and glory.
- **Application to Confession:** Confession should be done with a pure intention, seeking to please God and grow in holiness, rather than for selfish motives such as emotional relief or social approval.

4. Courage:

- **Definition:** Courage is the virtue that enables one to face difficulty and adversity with firmness and perseverance.
- **Application to Confession:** Courage is needed to confess sins honestly, without minimizing or concealing them out of shame or fear. It requires facing the truth about oneself and one's actions.

5. Humility:

- **Definition:** Humility is the virtue by which a Christian acknowledges that God is the author of all good. Humility provides the solid foundation for prayer and is the disposition for receiving truth, goodness, and love.

- **Application to Confession:** A good confession must be humble. Humility involves recognizing one's dependence on God's grace and acknowledging one's sins without pride or self-justification.

6. Sincerity:

- **Definition:** Sincerity is the quality of being genuine and honest in one's thoughts, words, and actions.
- **Application to Confession:** A good confession must be sincere. Sincerity requires an honest and truthful disclosure of sins, without deceit or pretense.

7. Contrition:

- **Definition:** Contrition is sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.
- **Application to Confession:** Contrition is essential for the Sacrament of Penance. It involves a heartfelt sorrow for having offended God and a firm purpose of amendment.

8. Obedience:

- **Definition:** Obedience is the virtue that inclines one to submit to legitimate authority and to follow just commands.
- **Application to Confession:** Obedience involves accepting the penance assigned by the priest and following his guidance in matters of spiritual growth.

9. Love of God:

- **Definition:** Love of God is the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.
- **Application to Confession:** Perfect contrition is motivated by love of God. Confession should be an act of love, seeking to restore one's relationship with God and to express gratitude for His mercy.

In summary: These virtues collectively contribute to a fruitful reception of the Sacrament of Confession. They help to avoid the pitfall of spiritual gluttony by ensuring that the sacrament is approached with a genuine desire for conversion, a humble recognition of one's sins, and a sincere commitment to following God's will. By cultivating these virtues, individuals can experience the full healing and transformative power of the Sacrament of Penance.



PART 3

How to Minister to Those with Spiritual Gluttony

<https://www.magisterium.com/s/c-9d6d4b4a-b5cc-440d-bcd5-e45a3e027624>

Ministering to individuals struggling with spiritual gluttony requires a nuanced approach, combining understanding, patience, and guidance rooted in Catholic teachings. Spiritual gluttony, as described by St. John of the Cross, involves seeking excessive sweetness and

consolation in spiritual practices rather than pursuing genuine purity and discretion [10].

Here's how to minister to those with spiritual gluttony:

Understanding Spiritual Gluttony

Spiritual gluttony manifests as an inordinate desire for sensible pleasure and sweetness in spiritual exercises [10]. Those affected by it may focus on experiencing emotional highs during prayer or devotions, becoming discouraged when these feelings are absent [6]. This can lead to a superficial engagement with faith, where the individual seeks personal gratification over deeper conversion and commitment to God's will [10].

Key Principles for Ministry

- **Focus on Virtue:** Encourage the cultivation of virtues, especially temperance, which helps moderate the attraction of pleasures and balance the use of created goods [20][21][22][23].
- **Promote Detachment:** Help individuals to detach from the need for constant spiritual gratification, guiding them toward a more profound love of God that is not dependent on feelings [14].
- **Emphasize Discretion:** Teach the importance of spiritual discretion, helping them to discern God's will and to seek spiritual growth through purity rather than pleasure [10].

Practical Steps for Ministry

- **Education and Awareness:** Educate individuals on the nature of spiritual gluttony, explaining how it differs from genuine spiritual seeking. St. John of the Cross notes that beginners often fall into this trap due to the initial sweetness found in spiritual exercises [10].
- **Encouragement of Self-Examination:** Encourage regular self-examination to help individuals identify whether they are seeking God for His own sake or for the consolations they receive [10].
- **Guidance in Prayer:** Guide them to adopt a balanced approach to prayer, emphasizing perseverance, patience, humility, and a focus on pleasing God rather than seeking personal satisfaction [6].
- **Promoting Mortification:** Encourage acts of mortification and self-denial to help curb the desire for spiritual sweetness. St. John of the Cross explains that God uses the "dark night" to restrain concupiscence and curb desire, teaching the soul to be spiritually sober [14].
- **Fostering a Love for the Cross:** Help individuals understand that true spiritual growth often involves dryness, challenges, and the acceptance of suffering. This understanding can help them move beyond seeking only pleasurable experiences in their faith [14].
- **Discernment and Obedience:** Stress the importance of seeking spiritual direc-

tion from a trusted advisor and obeying their guidance. St. John of the Cross notes that some individuals avoid counsel, preferring their own inclinations, which can lead to extremes and imbalances [10].

- **Community and Accountability:** Encourage participation in a supportive faith community where individuals can be held accountable and supported in their journey toward spiritual maturity.
- **Patience and Compassion:** Approach those struggling with spiritual gluttony with patience and compassion, recognizing that overcoming this tendency requires time and perseverance.

Addressing Related Issues

- **Spiritual Sloth:** Be aware that spiritual sloth, or acedia, can also be a factor, where individuals become weary of spiritual practices that lack immediate gratification [7][18].
- **Pride:** Help individuals guard against spiritual pride, which can arise from a sense of superiority based on their spiritual experiences or practices [13].
- **Avarice:** Some beginners demonstrate spiritual avarice, being discontent with what God gives them and always seeking more [5].

Conclusion

Ministering to those with spiritual gluttony involves guiding them toward a more mature and balanced faith, rooted in genuine love for God and detachment from the desire for constant consolation. By fostering virtues like temperance, humility, and obedience, and by providing practical guidance in prayer and spiritual practices, ministers can help individuals overcome spiritual gluttony and grow in authentic holiness.



[1] Juan de Yepes y Álvarez (St. John of the Cross), *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book 1, Chapter 6.1 - “Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony,” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[2] *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.1.

[3] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1809, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P65.HTM.

[4] *Ibid.*, §1838.

[5] *Ibid.*, §2341.

[6] *Ibid.*, §2407.

[7] *Op., Cit.*, Chapter 13.3.

[8] *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.6.

[9] *Ibid.*, Chapter 7.2.

[10] John Cassian, *Institutes*, Book XII, III, “How pride is equally destructive of all virtues,” Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350712.htm>.

[11] Delany, Joseph, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6, “Gluttony,” New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06590a.htm>.

+++++

What Are the Church’s Teachings on This?

The Catholic Church addresses the topic of gluttony, both in its general form and in its spiritual dimension, through various teachings and traditions. Here’s an overview of the Church’s teachings relevant to gluttony:

Gluttony as a Capital Sin

Gluttony is traditionally listed as one of the seven capital sins, also known as the seven deadly sins [2]. These sins are called “capital” because they are the root of other sins and vices [2].

- **Definition:** Gluttony is defined as an inordinate desire for and consumption of food and drink [1][5]. It is not merely about the quantity of food but also the intention and manner of eating [5].
- **Moral Implications:** The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* addresses the virtue of temperance, which counteracts gluttony, by moderating the attraction of the pleasures of the senses and provides balance in the use of created goods.
- **Scriptural Basis:** The Bible warns against excessive indulgence and emphasizes the importance of self-control. For example, Philippians 3:19 describes those “whose god is their belly,” indicating a life focused on bodily desires to the detriment of spiritual health [9].

Spiritual Gluttony

St. John of the Cross, in “The Dark Night of the Soul,” discusses spiritual gluttony as an imperfection common among beginners in the spiritual life.

- **Description:** Spiritual gluttony involves seeking and clinging to sensible sweetness and consolations in spiritual practices, such as prayer and devotion. Those with spiritual gluttony pursue these consolations for their own sake, rather than seeking God’s will and growing in virtue.
- **Critique:** St. John of the Cross identifies spiritual gluttony as a significant imperfec-

tion that can hinder true spiritual progress. It leads individuals to focus on their own feelings and experiences rather than on genuine love for God.

- **Remedies:** Overcoming spiritual gluttony involves detachment from spiritual consolations, embracing dryness and challenges in prayer, and seeking God for His own sake, not for the pleasure derived from spiritual practices.

The Virtue of Temperance

The Church emphasizes the virtue of temperance as a remedy for gluttony and other forms of excess.

- **Definition:** Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable.
- **Application:** Temperance applies not only to food and drink but also to other areas of life, promoting a balanced and moderate approach to all pleasures and material goods.
- **Importance:** The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that temperance is essential for living a moral life, as it helps individuals to avoid excess and to use created goods in a way that honors God and respects the well-being of oneself and others.

Practical Guidance

The Church provides practical guidance on avoiding gluttony and cultivating temperance [5].

- **Self-Control:** Encouraging self-control in eating and drinking, avoiding excessive indulgence, and being mindful of the needs of others [5].
- **Fasting and Abstinence:** Practicing fasting and abstinence, particularly during Lent and other penitential seasons, as a way to discipline the body and cultivate spiritual growth [2].
- **Gratitude:** Cultivating gratitude for the gifts of food and drink, recognizing them as blessings from God to be used responsibly and with moderation [5].

Modern Relevance

In contemporary society, where overconsumption and unhealthy lifestyles are prevalent, the Church's teachings on gluttony and temperance remain highly relevant [5]. They call individuals to a more mindful and balanced approach to food and other pleasures, promoting physical and spiritual well-being [5].

Conclusion

The Church's teachings on gluttony emphasize the importance of temperance, self-control, and a balanced approach to the pleasures of food and drink. Spiritual gluttony is identified

as a specific challenge for those seeking deeper spiritual growth, requiring detachment from consolations and a focus on genuine love for God. By embracing these teachings, individuals can avoid the pitfalls of gluttony and cultivate a more virtuous and fulfilling life.



[1] John Cassian, *Conference 5. Conference of Abbot Serapion. On the Eight Principal Faults*, “Chapter 26, How when we have got the better of the passion of gluttony we must take pains to gain all the other virtues,” Translated by C.S. Gibson. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 11. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894.) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/350805.htm>.

[2] Juan de Yepes y Álvarez (St. John of the Cross), *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book 1, Chapter 6.1 - “Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony,” chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgclefindmkaj/https://sanjuandelacruz.online/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Complete-Works-of-Saint-John-of-the-Cross-Volume-1_compressed.pdf.

[3] Clement of Alexandria, *The Paedagogus*, Book II, Chapter 1, “On Eating,” 408-420 AD, Translated by William Wilson, From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 2, Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885,) Revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/02092.htm>.

[4] *Op., Cit.*, Chapter 7.1.

+++++

What Are the Dangers of this Sin?

Gluttony, whether expressed in the excesses of food and drink or in the “spiritual gluttony” that seeks the sweet consolations of prayer for personal pleasure, carries several serious dangers for the human person and for the life of the Church.

1. Physical and Moral Damage

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* describes gluttony as an “excessive indulgence in food and drink” that can “injure his health or impair the mental equipment needed for the discharge of his duties”[6]. When the body is over fed, the soul is weakened; the habit of seeking pleasure in the flesh makes the person less attentive to the needs of others and to the duties of charity. The same source warns that a person who lives “merely to eat and drink” becomes a “mortal sinner” because the appetite dominates reason and will[6].

2. Spiritual Slavery to the Senses

St. John of the Cross, in *The Dark Night of the Soul* (Book I, ch. 6.1), explains that the first stage of spiritual gluttony is the “attachment to sensible sweetness” that makes the soul “dependent on the pleasures of the senses”[1]. This dependence turns the soul into a slave of its own appetites, preventing the growth of interior freedom that is essential for true communion with God.

3. Obstacles to the Dark Night and Purification

The same work (ch. 13.3) warns that spiritual gluttony “impedes the progress of the dark night” because the soul clings to consolations instead of embracing the “dryness” that purifies it[3]. The darkness that the Holy Spirit intends to bring about is thus delayed, and the soul remains in a state of superficial piety rather than deep conversion.

4. Promotion of Pride and Self Exaltation

The *Conference of Abbot Serapion* (chapter 26) identifies gluttony as one of the “principal faults” that leads to “vainglory,” because the sinner boasts of his ability to enjoy the finest foods and drinks. This pride “turns the heart toward self glorification rather than toward God’s glory”[2]. The same fault, when spiritual, becomes a “pride in one’s own consolations” that blocks humility and obedience[4].

5. Disruption of Community and Charity

When a person hoards food, spends extravagantly on lavish meals, or wastes resources, the Church’s social teaching is violated. The *Paedagogus* (Book II, 1) stresses that the Christian life is lived in community, and “the love of the neighbour” requires sharing what one has. Gluttony, by fostering selfish consumption, “breaks the bond of charity” and harms the common good[5].

6. Gateway to Other Vices

Gluttony is linked to other capital sins. The *Institutes* (Book XII, ch. 3) note that “the excess of food can lead to prodigality, avarice, and even to the sin of drunkenness,” because the lack of self control in one area tends to spread to others[7]. In the Eastern tradition, gluttony is said to “lead to voraciousness in everything else”[24].

7. Spiritual Acedia and Sloth

Acedia, the “spiritual sloth” described in the *Catechism* (cf. §2733), often follows the exhaustion that results from over indulgence. When the soul is “fatigued by the pursuit of pleasure,” it becomes “lax in vigilance” and “careless of heart,” opening the way to despair and neglect of prayer[23].

8. Loss of Authentic Joy in the Eucharist

St. John Cassian, cited in the *Ukrainian Catholic Catechism* (24 25), teaches that fasting and temperance free the soul to enjoy the “delight of things celestial.” When gluttony dominates, the faithful “cannot taste the true joy of the Eucharist” because the appetite for earthly food drowns the appetite for the spiritual nourishment of Christ[24] [25].

9. Endangering Salvation

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (§2290) teaches that the virtue of temperance “disposes us to avoid every kind of excess” and that “those who persist in grave excess incur grave guilt”[11]. Persistent gluttony, especially when it becomes a habitual

rejection of God’s law of moderation, can constitute a mortal sin that endangers one’s relationship with God.

Summary of the Dangers

1. **Physical harm and loss of mental clarity** – health deterioration that impedes the performance of Christian duties.
2. **Spiritual dependence on sensual pleasure** – the soul becomes enslaved to the senses, blocking interior freedom.
3. **Delay of purification** – the dark night of the soul is stalled, preventing deeper conversion.
4. **Pride and vainglory** – self exaltation replaces humility before God.
5. **Erosion of charity** – selfish consumption breaks the communal bond of love.
6. **Gateway to other sins** – excess in food often spreads to prodigality, avarice, drunkenness, etc.
7. **Acedia and spiritual sloth** – over indulgence leads to lethargy and neglect of prayer.
8. **Obscured Eucharistic joy** – the true delight of Christ’s presence is dulled.
9. **Grave moral culpability** – persistent, grave gluttony can constitute mortal sin, threatening salvation.

Recognizing these dangers invites the faithful to cultivate the virtue of temperance, practice fasting and modesty, and seek the “dryness” that purifies the soul, thereby turning away from both bodily and spiritual gluttony and moving toward authentic communion with God.



[1] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, “On the Call to Holiness In Today’s World,” §30, March 19, 2018, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html.

[2] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, §95, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

[3] Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Desiderio Desideravi*, §17, “The Liturgy: antidote for the poison of spiritual worldliness,” June 29, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/20220629-lettera-ap-desiderio-desideravi.html.

[4] Cole, Basil (2010) *Thomas Aquinas on Progress and Regress in the Spiritual Life*, Nova et Vetera, 8:89-106, <https://philpapers.org/rec/COLTAO-23>.

[5] *Op., Cit., Gaudete et exsultate* §57.

[6] *Ibid.*, §94 .

[7] *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church CHRIST – OUR PASCHA*, §757
https://eeparchy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Christ-our-Pascha-Catechism-of-the-Ukrainian-Catholic-Church-by-Comission-for-the-Catehism-z-lib.org_.pdf.

[8] *Ibid.*, “ “Gluttony and Its Opposite Virtue — Temperance,” §759.

[9] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “II. Humble Vigilance of Heart,” §2733, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P9Q.HTM.

[10] *Op., Cit.*, *Catechism of the Ukrainian Catholic Church: Christ – Our Pascha*, §760.

[11] *Op., Cit.*, CCC 2290.



Explain Spiritual Gluttony Especially in Regards to the Sacrament of Penance www.catholic.chat

Spiritual gluttony, while not explicitly defined in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, can be understood through its teachings on sin, virtue, and the sacrament of penance. Spiritual gluttony can be conceptualized as an excessive desire for spiritual goods, leading to a neglect of the true purpose of these goods, which is communion with God and the growth in virtue.

The *Catechism* discusses the nature of sin and the importance of the sacrament of penance in several sections. For instance, it emphasizes the need for conversion and the acknowledgment of one’s sins (CCC 1423-1424). The sacrament of penance is a means through which the faithful can receive God’s mercy and forgiveness, restoring their relationship with Him.

In the context of spiritual gluttony, one might consider how an excessive pursuit of spiritual experiences — such as extraordinary revelations, mystical experiences, or even the accumulation of knowledge about the faith — can lead to a form of spiritual pride or self-satisfaction. This can detract from the essence of the Christian life, which is to love God and neighbor authentically.

The *Catechism* highlights that true repentance involves a sincere acknowledgment of one’s sins and a desire to amend one’s life (CCC 1450). In this light, spiritual gluttony may manifest as a reluctance to confront one’s faults or a failure to engage in the humility necessary for genuine repentance. The sacrament of penance calls the faithful to a deeper self-examination and a sincere desire to grow in holiness, rather than merely seeking spiritual gratification.

Moreover, the *Catechism* notes that the sacraments, including penance, are meant to lead the faithful to a more profound relationship with God and not to be treated as mere rituals for personal satisfaction (CCC 1131). Thus, the sacrament serves as a corrective to spiritual gluttony by inviting individuals to confront their spiritual lives honestly and to seek true

communion with God.

In summary, while the *Catechism* does not specifically address spiritual gluttony, its teachings on sin, repentance, and the sacrament of penance provide a framework for understanding how an excessive desire for spiritual goods can lead to a disordered relationship with God. The sacrament of penance, therefore, serves as a vital means of returning to the right path, fostering humility, and nurturing a genuine love for God and others.

For reference, see:

- CCC 1423-1424: On the sacrament of penance and the need for conversion.
- CCC 1450: On the nature of repentance and acknowledgment of sin.
- CCC 1131: On the purpose of the sacraments.



In Catholic Theology, “Spiritual Gluttony” — Gemini AI

<https://g.co/gemini/share/2f5758244a98>

In Catholic theology, “spiritual gluttony” refers to an inordinate or excessive desire for spiritual experiences, consolations, and knowledge for their own sake, rather than for the purpose of growing in genuine love for God and others. It’s a subtle and often overlooked form of gluttony because it concerns things that are inherently good: prayer, spiritual reading, devotions, and seeking knowledge of God.

Here’s a breakdown of what spiritual gluttony entails:

- **Excessive pursuit of sensible sweetness:** Spiritual gluttons seek to “feel and taste God” in their devotions, desiring intense emotional or sensory experiences in prayer, Communion, or other spiritual acts. They prioritize these feelings over the invisible grace and the humble, sacrificial service of God’s will.
- **Insatiable desire for spiritual experiences:** It’s a pathological craving for spiritual highs, whether real or imagined. This can manifest as constantly seeking new devotions, conferences, or spiritual movements, always hoping for a new or more intense experience.
- **Learning for the sake of learning (without application):** While a desire to learn about the faith is good, spiritual gluttony can involve an excessive pursuit of intellectual knowledge about God and spiritual matters without it leading to practical application in charity, service, or deeper union with God. It becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to holiness.
- **Prioritizing personal preferences over God’s will:** Spiritual gluttons might prefer certain pious practices or ministries that they find gratifying, even if they are not what is most helpful, in harmony with their state in life, or in obedience to a spiritual director.
- **Frustration and anxiety when spiritual consolations are absent:** When God withdraws sensible delight (which He often does to purify the soul), a spiritual glutton can become frustrated, anxious, or confused, leading them to abandon their

spiritual practices or seek new ones in pursuit of those feelings.

- **A form of subtle selfishness:** At its root, spiritual gluttony is a form of spiritual selfishness, where the focus shifts from God and His will to one's own spiritual gratification and comfort. It's a desire to consume spiritual goods for personal satisfaction, rather than for growth in virtue and conformity to Christ.

Why it's problematic:

- **Detracts from true union with God:** True spiritual growth is about conforming one's will to God's, which often involves self-denial and perseverance through spiritual dryness. Spiritual gluttony keeps the focus on self and fleeting feelings.
- **Can lead to other sins:** Like other deadly sins, it can lead to further spiritual vices, such as pride (thinking one is spiritually advanced due to experiences), or a judgmental attitude towards those who don't share similar experiences.
- **Disordered appetite:** It signifies a disordered appetite in the spiritual realm, akin to physical gluttony where one overindulges in food for pleasure rather than for nourishment.

The antidote to spiritual gluttony is **temperance and humility**, focusing on the humble and faithful service of God's will, even when it lacks sensible sweetness, and allowing spiritual knowledge to spur one to action and charity towards others.

+++++

"Spiritual gluttony" in Catholic theology refers to a disordered desire for spiritual experiences and consolations, pursued in an excessive or self-serving way, rather than for the love of God and genuine spiritual growth. It's a subtle but potentially harmful vice.

Here's a Breakdown of What it Entails:

Key Characteristics:

- **Inordinate focus on spiritual sweetness:** The individual seeks spiritual practices (prayer, Mass, devotions, reading) primarily for the emotional comfort, satisfaction, or feelings of closeness to God they provide.
- **Self-centered motivation:** The pursuit of spiritual things becomes more about personal gratification than about genuinely seeking God's will, growing in virtue, or serving others.
- **Restlessness and dissatisfaction:** Like physical gluttony, spiritual gluttony leads to a constant craving for more intense or novel spiritual experiences. When these feelings are absent ("spiritual dryness"), the person may become frustrated, anxious, or constantly seek new practices to recapture the "high."
- **Neglect of essentials:** This excessive focus on feelings can lead to neglecting the more fundamental aspects of the spiritual life, such as consistent prayer even without intense feelings, fulfilling duties of one's state in life, practicing charity and

self-denial, and persevering through difficulties.

- **Superficiality:** Spiritual gluttony can result in a superficial engagement with faith, where the focus is on the “tasting” of God rather than a deep and transformative relationship.
- **Potential for other sins:** As the *National Catholic Register* notes, this can lead to other sins in oneself and others. For example, it might foster pride through a sense of spiritual superiority based on these experiences or lead to judgment of others who don’t seem to have the same feelings.

How it Differs from Healthy Spiritual Desire:

A healthy desire for God and spiritual growth is good and natural. The key difference lies in the motivation and the balance within one’s spiritual life. A person with a healthy spiritual life:

- Seeks God for His own sake, not just for the feelings He might provide.
- Understands that spiritual dryness is a normal part of the journey and perseveres in faith even without consolation.
- Balances prayer and devotions with practical charity and the duties of their vocation.
- Focuses on growing in virtue and conforming their will to God’s will.

In essence, spiritual gluttony is about treating God and spiritual practices as a means to an end (personal emotional satisfaction) rather than the ultimate end in themselves. It’s a form of spiritual self-indulgence that can hinder true growth in holiness.

Think of it like someone who only eats dessert and neglects nourishing food. They might experience fleeting pleasure, but they won’t be truly healthy or strong. Similarly, the spiritual glutton seeks only the “sweetness” and may miss out on the deeper nourishment of a mature and well-rounded spiritual life.



Sources:

“Gluttony,” *Catholic Answers Encyclopedia*,
<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/gluttony>.



St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*, “Chapter IV, Of Imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony.” *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*,
https://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/dark_night.vii.vi.html.

CHAPTER VI

Of imperfections with respect to spiritual gluttony.

WITH respect to the fourth sin, which is spiritual gluttony, there is much to be said, for

there is scarce one of these beginners who, however satisfactory his progress, falls not into some of the many imperfections which come to these beginners with respect to this sin, on account of the sweetness which they find at first in spiritual exercises. For many of these, lured by the sweetness and pleasure which they find in such exercises, strive more after spiritual sweetness than after spiritual purity and discretion, which is that which God regards and accepts throughout the spiritual journey.⁴⁰ Therefore, besides the imperfections into which the seeking for sweetness of this kind makes them fall, the gluttony which they now have makes them continually go to extremes, so that they pass beyond the limits of moderation within which the virtues are acquired and wherein they have their being. For some of these persons, attracted by the pleasure which they find therein, kill themselves with penances, and others weaken themselves with fasts, by performing more than their frailty can bear, without the order or advice of any, but rather endeavouring to avoid those whom they should obey in these matters; some, indeed, dare to do these things even though the contrary has been commanded them.

2. These persons are most imperfect and unreasonable; for they set bodily penance before subjection and obedience, which is penance according to reason and discretion, and therefore a sacrifice more acceptable and pleasing to God than any other. But such one-sided penance is no more than the penance of beasts, to which they are attracted, exactly like beasts, by the desire and pleasure which they find therein. Inasmuch as all extremes are vicious, and as in behaving thus such persons⁴¹ are working their own will, they grow in vice rather than in virtue; for, to say the least, they are acquiring spiritual gluttony and pride in this way, through not walking in obedience. And many of these the devil assails, stirring up this gluttony in them through the pleasures and desires which he increases within them, to such an extent that, since they can no longer help themselves, they either change or vary or add to that which is commanded them, as any obedience in this respect is so bitter to them. To such an evil pass have some persons come that, simply because it is through obedience that they engage in these exercises, they lose the desire and devotion to perform them, their only desire and pleasure being to do what they themselves are inclined to do, so that it would probably be more profitable for them not to engage in these exercises at all.

3. You will find that many of these persons are very insistent with their spiritual masters to be granted that which they desire, extracting it from them almost by force; if they be refused it they become as peevish as children and go about in great displeasure, thinking that they are not serving God when they are not allowed to do that which they would. For they go about clinging to their own will and pleasure, which they treat as though it came from God;⁴² and immediately their directors⁴³ take it from them, and try to subject them to the will of God, they become peevish, grow faint-hearted and fall away. These persons think that their own satisfaction and pleasure are the satisfaction and service of God.

4. There are others, again, who, because of this gluttony, know so little of their own unworthiness and misery and have thrust so far from them the loving fear and reverence which they owe to the greatness of God, that they hesitate not to insist continually that their confessors shall allow them to communicate often. And, what is worse, they frequently dare to communicate without the leave and consent⁴⁴ of the minister and steward of Christ, merely acting on their own opinion, and contriving to conceal the truth from him. And for this reason, because they desire to communicate continually, they make their confessions carelessly,⁴⁵ being more eager to eat than to eat cleanly and perfectly, although it would be healthier and holier for them had they the contrary inclination and begged their confessors not to command them to approach the altar so frequently: between these two extremes,

however, the better way is that of humble resignation. But the boldness referred to is⁴⁶ a thing that does great harm, and men may fear to be punished for such temerity.

5. These persons, in communicating, strive with every nerve to obtain some kind of sensible sweetness and pleasure, instead of humbly doing reverence and giving praise within themselves to God. And in such wise do they devote themselves to this that, when they have received no pleasure or sweetness in the senses, they think that they have accomplished nothing at all. This is to judge God very unworthily; they have not realized that the least of the benefits which come from this Most Holy Sacrament is that which concerns the senses; and that the invisible part of the grace that it bestows is much greater; for, in order that they may look at it with the eyes of faith, God oftentimes withholds from them these other consolations and sweetnesses of sense. And thus they desire to feel and taste God as though He were comprehensible by them and accessible to them, not only in this, but likewise in other spiritual practices. All this is very great imperfection and completely opposed to the nature of God, since it is Impurity in faith.

6. These persons have the same defect as regards the practice of prayer, for they think that all the business of prayer consists in experiencing sensible pleasure and devotion and they strive to obtain this by great effort,⁴⁷ wearying and fatiguing their faculties and their heads; and when they have not found this pleasure they become greatly discouraged, thinking that they have accomplished nothing. Through these efforts they lose true devotion and spirituality, which consist in perseverance, together with patience and humility and mistrust of themselves, that they may please God alone. For this reason, when they have once failed to find pleasure in this or some other exercise, they have great disinclination and repugnance to return to it, and at times they abandon it. They are, in fact, as we have said, like children, who are not influenced by reason, and who act, not from rational motives, but from inclination.⁴⁸ Such persons expend all their effort in seeking spiritual pleasure and consolation; they never tire therefore, of reading books; and they begin, now one meditation, now another, in their pursuit of this pleasure which they desire to experience in the things of God. But God, very justly, wisely and lovingly, denies it to them, for otherwise this spiritual gluttony and inordinate appetite would breed innumerable evils. It is, therefore, very fitting that they should enter into the dark night, whereof we shall speak,⁴⁹ that they may be purged from this childishness.

7. These persons who are thus inclined to such pleasures have another very great imperfection, which is that they are very weak and remiss in journeying upon the hard⁵⁰ road of the Cross; for the soul that is given to sweetness naturally has its face set against all self-denial, which is devoid of sweetness.⁵¹

8. These persons have many other imperfections which arise hence, of which in time the Lord heals them by means of temptations, aridities and other trials, all of which are part of the dark night. All these I will not treat further here, lest I become too lengthy; I will only say that spiritual temperance and sobriety lead to another and a very different temper, which is that of mortification, fear and submission in all things. It thus becomes clear that the perfection and worth of things consist not in the multitude and the pleasantness of one's actions, but in being able to deny oneself in them; this such persons must endeavour to compass, in so far as they may, until God is pleased to purify them indeed, by bringing them⁵² into the dark night, to arrive at which I am hastening on with my account of these imperfections.

⁴⁰[Lit., 'spiritual road.']

41[Lit., ‘these persons.’]

42[Lit., ‘and treat this as their God.’]

43[The Spanish is impersonal: ‘immediately this is taken from them,’ etc.]

44[Lit., ‘and opinion.’]

45[Lit., ‘anyhow.’]

46[Lit., ‘the other boldnesses are.’]

47[Lit., ‘they strive to obtain this, as they say, by the strength of their arms.’ The phrase is, of course, understood in the Spanish to be metaphorical, as the words ‘as they say’ clearly indicate.]

48[Lit., ‘who are not influenced, neither act by reason, but from pleasure.’]

49[Lit., ‘which we shall give.’]

50[áspero: harsh, rough, rugged.]

51[Lit., ‘against all the sweetnessness of self- denial.’]

52[Lit., ‘causing them to enter.’]



What’s Spiritual Gluttony? (Part I of II)

August 24, 2015

Fr. John Bartunek, LC

<https://spiritualdirection.com/2015/08/24/whats-spiritual-gluttony-part-i-of-ii>

Dear Father John, Our God and our Catholic faith is so beautiful, I always want to learn more and go deeper into it. I read a lot and have bought many, many books. Almost every time I hear about a book that is true to the faith, I want to own it and read it, so I buy it. Sometimes, I never find the time to read them. Is it OK to want to know more? Sometimes I feel that it’s just a security blanket. Am I overdoing it?

THE DESIRE TO learn more about our faith is a good one, a godly one, a desire planted and tended by the Holy Spirit. It leads us to engage our intellect, memory, and imagination in the quest to love God with our whole mind.

For some Christians, the need to know more, to learn more, to “think of what is above, not of what is on earth” (Colossians 3:2), often feels like a burden. These Christians have to wage a constant battle against the sin of spiritual sloth — laziness when it comes to things of the spiritual life.

But for other Christians, the drive to expand and deepen our knowledge of God and his revelation provides not only supernatural benefits, but also natural pleasure. In some cases, it can stir up temptations to spiritual gluttony — a less obvious, and therefore more dangerous, arena of sin.

Keeping Tabs on Frustration

God is infinite, so we will never come to know him so fully that nothing remains to discover. And yet sometimes we rebel against that reality. We become frustrated because we can’t find more time to study and learn, to master everything there is to master about our faith, or about certain aspects of our faith. We yearn to learn more and more, but we run into so many obstacles: time limits, energy limits, resource limits. Even the basic responsibilities of our state in life seem to be obstacles in our going deeper with God, and so we begin to

neglect them. All our free time, all our conversations, all our friendships — all our everything becomes more and more stuffed with devotions, and spiritual talks, and Bible studies, and faith-sharing groups, and conferences, and retreats, and seminars. And even then, we are frustrated because we can't fit more in.

This frustration seems holy because it is directed toward wanting to know God better. But something deeper is going on. This is clear, because instead of leading us to greater internal peace and external generosity, the flurry of spiritual over-consumption seems to make us tense, anxious, brittle, and even judgmental. What's really happening?

Frustrations of this kind are dangerous traps along our spiritual journey, traps often set by the ancient enemy, the devil himself. Christians thirsting for more knowledge of the faith are too in love with God to be exceptionally vulnerable to temptations of material excess. So the devil has to change tactics in order to impede their spiritual progress. Enter spiritual and intellectual gluttony. If our spiritual and intellectual eyes get bigger than our stomachs, and we act on that, we will experience some spiritual indigestion, and that will become a nice ally in the devil's efforts to slow our progress along the path of Christian maturity.

What's Spiritual Gluttony? (Part II of II)

August 31, 2015

Fr. John Bartunek, LC

<https://spiritualdirection.com/2015/08/31/whats-spiritual-gluttony-part-ii-of-ii>

Spiritualizing the Capital Sins

Both sloth and gluttony are capital sins — sins that give rise to other sins. We are used to seeing them in the material sphere, but we are not so used to seeing what they look like when they are spiritualized; yet sooner or later these sins do indeed show up on the doorstep of faithful, maturing Christians, dressed up in their spiritual disguises.

We experience pleasure in learning about the God we love. This is a good thing — all pleasures, in their proper settings, are good things. God created both our capacity for pleasure and the objects that stimulate those pleasures. The devil can't change that. But he can twist it around a bit, and he can get us to be more and more attached to the pleasure to the point that we begin preferring the pleasure itself — in practice if not in theory — to the God who created it.

We understand this clearly in the material realm. The physical pleasures associated with gluttony, lust, and sloth are obvious. We are less aware of the spiritualized forms of these capital sins. If our eagerness to learn about God and our faith stirs up anxiety, tension, conflict, and frustration instead of contentment and joyful enthusiasm, some intellectual gluttony may be creeping in. When this happens, we need to nip it in the bud. We need to accept once again, intentionally, the truth that we already know: We will never be able to learn everything about God and the spiritual life; our journey to Christian maturity will continually present new vistas and discoveries, and we don't have to try to exhaust them.

The Right Amount

The practical trick for keeping our God-given desire for greater knowledge healthy is to think in terms of the next step. We don't need to look at the 3.3 million volumes in the libraries at the great Catholic universities. Rather, we should look at Holy Spirit the two or

three books (or whatever other resources) that we really feel drawn to right now and dip into them, working through them and seeking to increase both the breadth and the depth of our knowledge. As we work through these books, other titles will come onto the radar screen. Put them on a wish list. When we are ready for another book, we can look through the list and see which ones draw us most intensely. This is often how the Holy Spirit guides us. He will draw us to certain titles or classes or other resources, and we will find ourselves just kind of following along. He knows what will help us most in each moment and each season of our journey, and he often guides us in subtle, gentle ways.

Another practical approach, for those who like planning and organizing, is to set some personal study goals for each liturgical season, or for each calendar year. Plan ahead what you would like to study, thinking through it intentionally, and then get all the materials, place them on your active bookshelf, and work through them gradually, enjoyably, peacefully.

You might have a goal, for instance, of reading three books on prayer this winter, or reading all the works of St. Francis de Sales this year. As more items and ideas pop up, put them on your wish list and pile them onto your inactive bookshelf. This approach can be used as an individual, or by plugging into study circles with other fellow Christian travelers.

Grateful Trust

We should be grateful for the good, holy desire that we feel deep inside — the desire to know better and better all that God has revealed to us about himself, this world, and the way to live our lives to the full. We need to continue acting on this desire, but doing so with the childlike humility and joy that Jesus values so much. We will always have more to discover as we venture toward the Father's house, and that should fill our hearts with delight, not frustration.