



Virtue of the Month:
Temperance

Saintly Exemplar:
St. Thérèse of
Lisieux



1873-1987

Sacred Scripture:

“O Lord, Your boundary
lines mark out delightful
places for me...”
Psalm 16:5-6

HOME/SCHOOL CONNECTION

Temperance

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“*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. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion...Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: “Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites.” In the New Testament it is called ‘moderation’ or ‘sobriety.’ We ought to live sober, up right, and godly lives in this” (CCC 1809).

What is the virtue of temperance?

Temperance is the virtue or acquired habit which regulates, according to reason and faith, the attraction of the pleasure toward the senses, particularly the attraction toward food and sexual pleasure. The senses of taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell are in accord with God’s good order of creation and involve pleasure. However, we frequently desire sense-pleasure in excess. Therefore, there is need of this virtue to moderate or order our desires involving the senses.

- A virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good. We develop virtues or good habits through education, deliberate acts, and perseverance in struggle.
- The natural virtue of temperance is the practice of moderation, restraint, self-discipline, self-control and self-mastery in all things. The ultimate goal of temperance is a good, joy-filled, decent life in this world.
- The supernatural virtue of temperance enables us, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and our cooperation through the power of our will (“willpower”), to use all things in moderation and to direct even the pleasurable things in life toward our salvation and the salvation of others. This virtue sometimes leads us to forego even permissible pleasures (mortification), in order to gain godly, joy-filled pleasure in every area of our life.
- There is a higher purpose to life than simply pleasure for pleasure’s sake. We are to use pleasure in moderation otherwise it can control us and become an “idol” or “god”. Overindulgence in any area leads to loss of freedom, loss of joy, and loss of ultimate satisfaction. Our ultimate satisfaction is knowing and loving God, Who is the fulfillment of all our desires.

Why do we need the virtue of temperance?

- The practice of moderation, self-control, and self-discipline is essential for developing character and controlling inordinate desires within our bodies.
- Temperance guides us in our enjoyment of good things in balanced moderation, never in excess. We can become addicted to things that are essentially good such as food, possessions, sports, drink, entertainment, recognition, work, money, power, seeking success etc. Overindulging in anything is a vice because it is lack of self-control and places the gift over the Giver (Jesus).
- We need temperance to avoid being extravagant in lifestyle or expenditure. We have a responsibility to use the things of this world wisely, especially to help the poor. Sharing with those in need is required by the Gospel.
- Our task is to ask for and cooperate with God’s grace in developing the virtue of temperance, and allowing Him to perfect it in us.

Suggestions for teaching the virtue of temperance at home:

Common principles for the practice of temperance within the family:

- We need to remember the purpose behind eating, drinking, playing sports, making purchases etc. so that we use attractive things in a tempered way that contribute to our legitimate goals in life.
- According to Christ's teaching in the Gospel, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. There is a comprehensiveness to the commandment, indicating that in all things, including the indulgence of appetites, we must be directed toward the Kingdom of Heaven.
- During prayer time, examine your conscience each night to determine if there are areas in your life that need proper restraint to resist self indulgence. Pray for and cooperate with God's grace to strengthen you to resist temptation and to avoid situations that can lead to overindulgence.
- In yourself and your children, develop and teach temperance that leads to deeper interior conversion especially during Advent and Lent, giving up things that are desired and to which you are overly attached. Offer these sacrifices to God for the good of family members or others who face difficulties and trials. We practice mortification in imitation of Christ Who fasted in the desert for 40 days.
- Growing in restraint and self-control to even begin making sacrifices and offering penances for the love of God (mortification) are necessary for spiritual wellbeing and even small children can do these. These sacrifices strengthen one's character so that when sufferings, setbacks, and contradictions occur, one has the spiritual courage to endure that suffering.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of temperance for children:

- The desire to possess more and more is encouraged in our society. Guide your children to temper their desire for too many possessions and the attachment to possessions. An easy test to see if we have become attached to possessions is to see if we are willing to give them away. Example: when you get a new toy, donate another toy to a collection for poor children. Parents, be careful how much that you lavish upon your children and remember that your child watches your example of acquiring things.
- Teach your children moderation in the use of time, limiting TV viewing, phone and internet use, etc. while developing a daily routine for homework, prayer, chores and outside activities.

Aspects in teaching the virtue of temperance for teens:

- Guide your children in making purchases, avoiding impulse buying and waiting several days before purchasing an item that is not really needed. Ask teens to consider: Why do you want this item? Do you already have something that is similar? Is it prudent for you to use your money in this manner? Do you feel peace about this purchase? Do we acquire things in order to show off, to be in fashion, just for a change, to compensate for some inner dissatisfaction or to fill some kind of vacuum in our lives?
- Teach your children moderation in appearance with clothing that is neat, modest, and appropriate.

Adapted from Raise Happy Children Teach Them Virtue, Mary Ann Budnick, R. B. Media, Inc., pp. 91-152

Temperance

St. Therese of Lisieux

Steps in learning and developing the virtue of temperance are:

1. The child realizes that everything is a gift from God and we are to use His gifts with moderation. Is this item a need, a want or an impulse item? What would God say about it? Will it make me a better person?
2. Becoming attached to something leads to loss of freedom and joy by placing the gift above the Giver of all gifts - Jesus.
3. The child learns to distinguish between what is a need and a want.
4. The child learns to think of others first and to share with those in need.

Good habits/virtues are developed through practice.



Prayer to St. Therese of Lisieux

O my God! I offer Thee all my actions of this day for the intentions and for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I desire to sanctify every beat of my heart, my every thought, my simplest works, by uniting them to Its infinite merits; and I wish to make reparation for my sins by casting them into the furnace of Its Merciful Love.

O my God! I ask of You for myself and for those whom I hold dear, the grace to fulfill perfectly Your Holy Will, to accept for love of You the joys and sorrows of this passing life, so that we may one day be united together in Heaven for all Eternity.
Amen