

VIRTUE OF THE MONTH

TEMPERANCE



St. Thérèse of Lisieux
1873-1897

Picture: Lisieux, France

In Brief:

ON CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE

“Lord Jesus Christ, teach me to use all the things of this life and this world for Your Kingdom. Whatever I need or enjoy, whatever things I use in the brief time of life, help me to always use them for Your honor and glory and for the betterment of others. Remind me always that we are passing through this world, and that our ownership of things is very temporary—almost an illusion. **Help me to curb my needs and appetites so that I will be more prepared to give up things for Your honor and glory and for the needs of my neighbor.** I ask this of You, Christ my Lord. Amen.”

The Virtue Driven Life

Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R.

Sacred Scripture:

“O Lord... Your
boundary lines
mark out
delightful places
for me...”

Psalm 16:5-6

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, upright, and godly lives in this world” (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 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, firm disposition to do good. We develop virtues or good habits through education, good acts frequently done, 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 of all gifts, Who is 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.

Temperance

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

“In the writings of Thérèse of Lisieux we do not find perhaps, as in other Doctors, a scholarly presentation of the things of God, but we can discern an enlightened witness of faith which, while accepting with trusting love God’s merciful condescension and salvation in Christ, reveals the mystery and holiness of the Church.”

Divini Amoris Scientia
Pope John Paul II



Fast Facts

Also Known As:

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus
‘The Little Flower of Jesus’
Doctor of the Church
Patron of AIDS sufferers
Patron of tuberculosis
Patron of missions

Feast Day:

October 1

Her Life

- Thérèse grew up in a loving family as the youngest child in a family of nine children of whom only five daughters survived to adulthood.
- Because Thérèse was the ‘baby’ of the family, frequently she was favored in a particular way with not only temporal goods but more importantly unconditional love and hence used to getting everything she desired.
- As a child, Thérèse had a temper and threw tantrums when she did not get her way. She was over-sensitive and cried easily. When she was offered an item from a basket of toys, she took the whole basket. “I choose everything!,” she declared triumphantly.
- When Thérèse was 4 years old her mother died. Her older sister, Pauline who became a second mother to her, taught Therese until she was 9 years old. At about that time, Pauline left home and joined the Carmelite convent. Therese determined in her heart that she too would join the Carmelites someday. She was bitterly disappointed that Pauline was leaving and that she was not allowed to accompany her sister.
- Accustomed to getting her way, Therese persisted in her attempts to join the Carmelites. She began her quest by appealing to the administrative priest of the community, the local Bishop, and then the Pope himself. The Bishop finally allowed her to enter the Carmelites after Easter in 1888 at the age of 15.
- In the convent, Thérèse was appointed assistant mistress of novices. She taught them her ‘little way’ to attain holiness through confidence and love in God.
- Thérèse, the most beloved and well-known saint of modern times, wrote her spiritual memoir “Story of a Soul.” She died of tuberculosis at the age of 24.

How is Saint Therese of Lisieux a model of Temperance?

- Thérèse was the spoiled, favorite child in her family. She was also vain, stubborn, strong-willed, and given to tantrums. She developed an exaggerated sense of sinfulness and suffered from self-doubt. To find her path to Heaven, she followed her ‘little way’ which was to do *little*, everyday tasks with *great* love. She gave up her selfish ways and as she learned to trust Jesus to make her holy, her wild emotions and outbursts no longer controlled her.
- Thérèse was determined to become a saint. She saw herself as a tiny flower in God’s garden. She stated, “Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be.” She relied on small, daily sacrifices instead of great deeds to be the means of going to Heaven.
- As part of her ‘little way,’ she tried to remain like a little child. She did not take credit for the good she did or the talents she possessed. She referred everything to God’s goodness and entrusted herself entirely to Him.

Practices to foster the growth of the virtue of temperance

- **Prayer to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux:**

St. Thérèse, the Little Flower, please pick me a rose from your Heavenly Garden and send it to me with a message of love. Ask God to grant the request I Thee implore and tell Him I will love Him, each day, more and more. Amen.

- Make a list of the words that describe temperance from page one. Name situations in which you practiced temperance. Discuss the fact that the practice of temperance usually involves asking God for His help, cooperating with His grace through self-control and then avoiding situations that can tempt us to be overindulgent.
- 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. During Advent and Lent, decide to give up something that you like and perhaps 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.
- Name characteristics of people who practice the virtue of temperance?
 1. Temperate people can delay gratification; they can casually take or leave enjoyable goods.
 2. Temperate people are joyful.
 3. Temperate people recognize their dignity comes from being a child of God, not from possessions, what they know and can do what they look like, etc.
 4. Temperate people put people ahead of things.
 5. Temperate people appreciate, enjoy and use God's gifts well but they never elevate the gift above the Giver of all gifts, Who is Jesus.
- Moderation distinguishes between what is reasonable and what is self-indulgent and makes reasonable use of our senses, our time etc. in accordance with true and upright principles. Discuss good principles that are necessary to develop the virtue of temperance and how to practice the virtue in specific circumstances.
- To live a truly Christian life we have to be able to say "no" to ourselves. What are some of the things for which we need to practice moderation? What are messages in the media that contradict living by the virtue of temperance? What are the underlying reasons for these messages?
- Name problems that arise when we live with lack of moderation, such as too much time watching TV, playing video games, texting or eating snacks.
- Read about a biblical saint that lived the virtue of temperance.
Example: St. John the Baptist, see *Matthew* 3:4.
- As a class, read about a saint and together discuss how this person models the virtue of temperance.
Examples: St. Augustine, St. Francis de Sales, St. Jane Francis de Chantal
- During prayer time, examine your conscience each night and ask God if there is an area in your life for which you need His help to practice the virtue or temperance.
- We are to be good stewards of all that we have been given, using everything for the dignity of the human person and the Kingdom of God. What does it mean to be a good steward?

- Read one of the Scripture passages and pick a word or phrase that stood out for you:
Matthew 5:1-12 The Beatitudes: Those who are “poor in spirit” recognize that all we have is a gift from God. We are stewards of our possessions and are to practice temperance.
Matthew 9: 10-17 Jesus shows temperance by taking what is there to feed the people and leftovers are gathered.
I Corinthians 10:13 God will always assist us in temptation if we ask for His help.
- In our desire to develop virtue, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit is critical. Based upon this fact, discuss the quote below. “How many times do we lose our peace because we find that our sanctification is not progressing rapidly enough, that we still have too many faults? But this does nothing but delay things! St. Francis de Sales goes so far as to say that ‘*Nothing retards progress in a virtue so much as wanting to acquire it with too much haste!*’” (Taken from *Searching for and Maintaining Peace, A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart*, Father Jacques Philippe, www.stpauls.us, (800)343-2522, pp. 53 - 54)
- Memorize Scripture passages that focus on temperance:
Sirach 31:22 “In everything you do be moderate”
2 Peter 1:5-6 “This is reason enough for you to make every effort to undergird your virtue with faith, your discernment with virtue, and self control with discernment; this self-control, in turn, should lead to perseverance, and perseverance to piety, and piety to care for your brother, and care for your brother, to love.”
1 Timothy 3:15 “So that if I should be delayed you will know what kind of conduct befits a member of God’s household, the Church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”
Ephesians 5:15 “Keep careful watch over your conduct. Do not act like fools, but like thoughtful men.”
Titus 2:1-8 “As for yourself, let your speech be consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men that they must be temperate, serious-minded, and self-controlled; likewise sound in the faith, loving and steadfast. Similarly, the older women must behave in ways that befit those who belong to God. They must not be slanderous gossips or slaves to drink. By their good example they must teach the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, busy at home, kindly, submissive to their husbands. Thus the word of God will not fall into disrepute. Tell the young men to keep themselves completely under control – nor may you yourself fail to set them good example. Your teaching must have the integrity of serious, sound words to which no one can take exception.”

Jesus lived perfect Temperance.

“Because our needs are limited, but our wants are unlimited, a virtue is necessary to restrain our inordinate appetites and desires—and that virtue is called temperance. It has for its objective the regulation of the sensible appetites by reason.

If we want to save our soul for eternity, we must discipline our body in time. And we do this not with sadness but with gladness, after the example of Jesus ‘Who having joy set before Him endured the Cross.’”

For those who wish to cultivate the virtue of temperance...each day practice at least three trivial mortifications, for example, holding back the sarcastic word or returning a kindly answer to a sneer. Second, the magnitude of the mortification is not as important as the love of God for which it is done...It is the motive that matters – do them out of love of God.

The Seven Virtues, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, Garden City Books, pp. 64, 65, 69.

Additional Resources on the virtue of temperance

Pre-school through Third Grade

- *Book of Saints, "Super Heroes of God"*, Part 2, Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D., Catholic Book Publishing Corp. (2 pages with picture)
- *A Story of Saint Thérèse*, Brother Ernest, C.S.C., Mary's Books, www.Marys-Books.com, Amherst, WI.
- *Saints Tell Their Stories*, Mitchell, Patricia and Lo Cascio, Maria Cristina; The Word Among Us Press, www.wordamongus.org.
- *Book of Saints for Catholic Children*, 96 Illustrated Stories, Lord, Fr. Daniel, William J. Hirten Co.
- *Little Book of Saints*, Volume 2, Kathleen M. Muldoon, Pauline Books and Media (2 pages with picture)
- *Picture Book of Saints*, Saint Joseph Edition, Illustrated Lives of the Saints for Young and Old, Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D., Catholic Book Publishing Corp.
- *First Book of Saints, Their Life-Story and Example*, Father Lawrence Lovasik, S.V.D.
- *Teach Me About Saints*, discussions and activities for young children, Paul S. And Joan E. Plum, Catherine M. Odell, Our Sunday Visitor, (800) 348-2440.
- *Saints for Children: St. Therese in Jesus' Garden*, Anne E. Neuberger, Our Sunday Visitor.
- *Glory Stories*, Volume II, *God's Little Flower, The Story of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, with workbook, Catholic World Mission, www.catholicworldmission.org or (203) 287-6314.
- *St. Therese of Lisieux*, DVD, My Catholic Family, The life of St. Therese and her little way are explored, (30 min.) Available from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization

Fourth Grade through Eighth Grade

- *Saints for Young Readers for Every Day, Volume 2*, Wallace, Susan Helen, F.S.P., Pauline Books and Media
- *The Little Flower*, The Story of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Mary Fabyan Windeatt, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.(800) 437-5876, (165 pages – quick, easy reading with pictures).
- *Saint Thérèse and the Roses*, Helen Walker Homan, Ignatius Press
- *Saints of the Church, A Teacher's Guide to the Vision Books*, Michael G. Allen, Ignatius Press. Includes Language in Context, Time Line, Topics for Written Reports, Discussion Questions and more.
- *Thérèse, Living on Love*, The Life and Impact of Thérèse of Lisieux, A Television Documentary (55 min.)
- *Thérèse, the true story of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, Ordinary Girl, Extraordinary Soul. A Leonardo Defilippis Film. (DVD, 96 min.) Available from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization

Ninth Grade through Twelfth Grade

- *The Story of A Soul, Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, edited by Mother Agnes of Jesus, (Teaches her 'little way', 216 pages – a smaller sized book)
- *Modern Saints, Their Lives and Faces*, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, (15 pages with many pictures)
- *The Little Flower*, The Story of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, Mary Fabyan Windeatt, Tan Books and Publishers, Inc.(800) 437-5876, (165 pages – quick, easy reading with pictures).
- *Thérèse, Living on Love*, The Life and Impact of Thérèse of Lisieux, A Television Documentary (55 min.)
- *Thérèse, the true story of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, Ordinary Girl, Extraordinary Soul. A Leonardo Defilippis Film. (DVD, 96 min.) Available from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization
- *Thérèse of Lisieux, My Vocation is Love*, Pauline Video, DVD (21 min.) Available from the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization

Resources for Teachers and Parents

- *The Virtue Driven Life*, Groeschel, Father Benedict J, C.F.R.
- *Raise Happy Children Teach Them Virtue*, Budnick, Mary Ann, R.B. Media, Inc.
- *The Many Faces of Virtue*, DeMarco, Donald, Emmaus Road Publishing.
- *The Heart of Virtue*, DeMarco, Donald, Ignatius Press.