

On Gaining and Keeping Purity, XIII

Catholic institutions. Regis University for example, is formally and materially supportive of the sexual revolution.

But here is some good news:

The opposite virtues to each vice can reverse the blindness of the intellect.

St. Thomas is exactly right in this...the blindness can be reversed. The loss of virginity is grievous to be sure, but there is a secondary purity which can be strong and glorious! St. Thomas adds one more thing:

But the disturbance which a man suffers in the fight against concupiscent tendencies is for a limited time. For this decreases as a result of a man refusing to consent to it; in fact, the more a person indulges in pleasures, the more does the desire for pleasure grow in him. Thus, concupiscent feelings are weakened by acts of abstinence and other corporeal practices suitable to those who have the vow of continence.

Or of anyone's state of life. In other words, some penances which might be appropriate to a priest may not be for a father or mother. Still, the principle is the same. Fight against evil tendencies, and you will experience great difficulty at first. But over time, these difficulties decrease.

And let us not fear the past and its potential power over us. It is true that the difficulties in combating impurity include the memory, which drags up before us all sorts of filth from the past. But continue on the path to purity, and a remarkable thing happens. This is described well in a passage whose author I can't remember, which is perhaps important when talking about forgetfulness.

The Sacrament of Penance also heals our imagination insofar as we now see ourselves as having righted the wrong and having done the right thing. This helps us to improve our image of ourselves by recognizing that God is helping us through grace to perfect ourselves and to overcome our disorders. Second, it also helps us to recognize our ability to fall into the types of sins which we commit. This has a direct connection to what is called the grace of forgetfulness (some authors call this the purification of the memory). This grace works in a variety of ways in different people according to their state in life but with respect to the penitent it has two primary effects. The first is that it helps the person not to recall the specific content of their sins. The images which we have of our past sins can cause us to fall into sin again which will have further psychological effects, yet this grace helps us not to recall them. It seems that it works directly on the memory but it must also have an effect on the cogitative power insofar as it heals the association with certain kinds of acts or circumstances in the past. Since the function of the cogitative power is to go back into memory and associate with the phantasm in the imagination the sensible species which has been stored that is like or connected to the phantasm, then this grace breaks that association so that our past sins are not associated with the phantasm in the future. While this works antecedently so that nothing comes into our imaginations that could cause us to sin or do harm to ourselves or others, it does not take away the person's ability to recall it voluntarily. It would behoove us to pray for the great grace of forgetfulness from time to time. If you can remember to do so...

St. Thomas continues from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

Someone has an acute intellect because he can easily penetrate the essence of the thing or its effects. Someone has a dulled intellect who cannot easily penetrate the essence of the thing or see the effects which arise from it quickly or at all.

Since impurity dulls the intellect greatly, it is essential to trust someone else on matters of conscience if one is impure. That is, any peace or truce given to something like pornography is a fool's truce. No truce may be made with something that evil. It's just another trick of the Prince of Lies to get us to delay conversion.

We switch for a moment to the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas (ST II-II q. 15 a.3):

Lust and gluttony tend to focus the intellect and operations of the soul on the vehement pleasures which arise from their objects. As a result, man becomes greatly intent or applies himself to corporal things and so he is debilitated in those things which pertain to intelligence. In other words, as the mind becomes focused on some physical thing and sees it in a specific way, the intellect becomes focused on other things in the same way.

For example in lust, the person becomes fixated or oriented toward venereal pleasure which lowers the mind by focusing on lower things. This results in the person's inability to consider spiritual things. When the intellect becomes focused on the physical thing from the point of view of the pleasure gained from it, then the intellect begins looking at other things

from that point of view. This means that when he looks at another human being, he loses subtlety of mind in consideration of the man or the woman and looks at him or her from the point of view of lust rather than in a fuller way. In this manner the mind is said to be dulled because it cannot see the person or thing in a deeper or fuller manner.

A few conclusions can be drawn from this. The first is that every sin darkens the intellect, not only to the specific sin (and so sin makes one blind to sin) but also to sin in general insofar as the lower powers and the possible intellect itself are trained and habituated not to follow the Natural Law, i.e., reality. Hence, sin has an inherent stultifying effect.

This should make it clear that we need to trust the Scriptures, the Catechism, the doctrines of the saints in these matters, and not the world. The blindness can be just too great.

When a person sins, he becomes blind to the sin and will find it hard to see that a) he is sinning and b) that the form of action is sinful. He will find it hard to see what is wrong with this form of action, even when it is explained to him.

This may sound grim, because it is. The blindness of so many is terrible. We have lawmakers who are at perfect peace with the pornography industry, and its sister industries of contraception and abortion. We have entire public school systems which are utterly blind to the damage caused to children by impurity, and in fact even encourage the children to engage in it. And this goes even for some