

Episode: The Temple and the Virtue of Holy Purity

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins, and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

It is in the nature of people in love to demand total exclusivity of one another when they love if their love is going to prove sincere and true. In other words, love somehow requires a purity of heart, a single mindedness in the person loving. This is in essence, what Our Lord teaches us today in the Gospel this Sunday. If we open up St. John's Gospel, we read about the cleansing of the temple. "Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand. And Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple men selling oxen, sheep, and doves and money changers at their tables. And making a kind of whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, also the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the money of the money changers and overturned the tables. And to them who were selling doves, he said, 'take these things away, and do not make the house of my Father a house of business.' And his disciples remembered that it is written zeal for thy house has consumed me."

Why did Our Lord get upset? This is a rare moment in the Gospel when he he is kind of angry. But Our Lord who had all his passions in order, he willed to be angry. And his anger was justified because the worship that was due to his Father was being mingled with human motives, with motives that were not worthy of his Father God. And when it comes to the sacred, Our Lord's makes no allowances for competition. Lord, you had already said it, at another point, "you cannot serve God and mammon. Either you will love one and hate the other, or you will cling to one and despise the other." We cannot have a divided heart. It's either going to be God or ourselves: love of God to despising ourselves, or love of self to the point of despising God, as St. Augustine puts it in the *City of God*. The virtue which allows us to love God and everyone else around us with an undivided heart, with an ordered heart is holy purity. As St. Josemaria would say, this is not the most important of all virtues. But it is absolutely necessary for the most important of all virtues, which is charity, the love of God.

Thus, the sixth commandment, which, I don't know, many people think is a negative commandment because it says, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shall not commit impure actions, and and so on, is really eminently positive, because it is in strict relation with the most important commandment, which is the first one, thou shall love God above all things, thou shall love God with your whole heart, with your whole mind, with everything you got; with your body, as well, as St. Paul says, to the Romans, "offer up, I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercy of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living, wholly pleasing to God, your spiritual service."

Holy purity, is a virtue that allows us to worship, to worship God rightly, to offer sacrifices to, to be able to truly dedicate ourselves to our ultimate end, which is that of contemplation of, of God, and receiving of God's love.

When people claim that this virtue is is negative, they're entirely wrong, precisely because even the first words of the first few pages of the New Testament, the first words of Our Lord on this virtue are very positive. When he is speaking to the crowds, on the Sermon on the Mount, he says, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." This is entirely positive, we shall see God, we shall contemplate God. Therefore, it is true that what St. Josemaria said about this virtue that it is really a joyful affirmation. It is nothing. He didn't like to speak about impurity. He always changed the subject when people started talking about things like that. And whenever he spoke about purity, he always spoke about holy purity. He added that adjective, because, because it reminds us of what it's for, it is to contemplate God, to love God. It leads us to God, it marks out the path for us.

Now, of course, purity is not simply a virtue for the single, let's say, but for everyone—married, single, priest, religious, whoever. It is a virtue that allows us to see God behind everyone and everything, every situation in our lives. We have kind of this X ray vision, we are able to see what's important and what is not important. In fact, I don't know if the word *contemplative* comes from the from Latin, at least, from *cum templo*. I think St. Thomas Aquinas says it at some point, but I'm not sure if he had the right etymology, or people thought that that's where where it came from. But anyway, *cum templo* would mean with temple or being in the temple, always carrying the temple with you all day long. Not just, it's not about just being at church all day, but when you leave church, we, you know, this virtue allows us to be a contemplative, to carry that temple, to carry God with us wherever we go. And that's so far fetched because Our Lord himself said in today's Gospel, towards the end, that he was not speaking about the temple when he said that he was going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. He was really talking about the temple of his body, his temple, where the entire divinity dwelled bodily, as St. Paul says, was, a temple, is a temple. The Incarnation is the temple, par excellence. But also we are bodies, we are a temple of God because he lives in us. Our Lord says that to the Apostles that he was going to make up his abode, the Trinity is going to make an abode in us where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can live. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own. You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body," says St. Paul to the Corinthians.

It's interesting how St. Augustine, when, well he had a lot of problems with the virtue of holy purity as we know, he says that he was looking for God in worldly things, and because he was looking for God, so and so, so much in worldly things, he was dispersed and, and he was kind of poured out of himself. And then he he makes an allusion to kind of God pour, pouring his grace over him and and says that when God pours himself over us that he's not spilt but he gathers us up together. "Late have I loved you, oh beauty so ancient, oh beauty so new. Too late have I loved you. Behold, you are within me and I was outside and it was there that I sought you. Deformed as I was, I ran after those beautiful things that you have made. You were with me, but I was not with you for those things kept me far from you, which unless they existed in you would have no being." This is St. Augustine's reflection after he converted, how he realized that God was within him as in a temple. And yet St. Augustine was looking for happiness in course pleasures. Well, this is what happens to a convert when, you know, as he did realize is that God was so close to him, so close, and God is close to you and to me right now, very close in our soul. And in order to increase that the intensity of not only the awareness, but the intensity of his presence, with his grace with his love, we need to live the virtue of holy purity.

Purity is as any virtue can grow. It's not just kind of a binary state, you know, either I'm pure or not. Either I have fallen or not. No, it really, as a virtue and as a positive, joyful affirmation, it is something that we can grow in. We can grow in the intensity of love. Every time we serve others, every time we we worship God truly and sincerely, we grow in the virtue of holy purity. Every time we go to Communion and desire to receive Our Lord, we grow in the virtue of holy purity. It is eminently positive, but in order to protect this beautiful gift, which,

which indeed is very valuable for the love of God and for the love of our neighbor, we need to make choices. We need to make choices which may be countercultural, depending on what culture you live in, but probably most of us live in, in, in a in a culture that that really seeks to destroy this virtue. And we need to fight against that. And we need to rebel. We cannot give in, this is a battle. It really is a battle. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, it's a battle for purity. And it's a battle because we have a disordered tendency after original sin to confuse the the, the that which is pleasurable for that which really makes us happy, which, you know, to confuse pleasure for love. If you ask people what love means, most most people think sex. And yet we know that conjugal love within marriage is, could be, certainly an expression of love. If it's open to life, and if it is within the commitment of two people, a man and a woman who have given themselves in marriage with God. Well, that certainly is an expression of love, a beautiful expression of love. However, people will confuse and reduce love to simply that which is sexual in any context. And that is what we have to rebel against. Because that presupposes that we are really not persons, that we're just bodies, and that our ultimate happiness is here on earth.

Look at what St. Gregory the Great says, "there are some who want to be humble without being despised. They want to be content with what they have without suffering need. They want to be chaste without mortifying their body. When they try to acquire virtues, while fleeing from the efforts that virtue requires, it is as though they expect it to win a war by living comfortably in the city without having anything to do with the combat on the battlefield." We are in a battle. And, like athletes, St. Paul says, we need to then, you know, we need to deny ourselves and he says, "they deny themselves for a perishable crown and we for an imperishable one," really what we should be denying ourselves even more, because our crown is worth more than their perishable crown and their laurels. Guarding our senses in view of love, in view of holy purity, is really what is ultimately a way of respecting others intimacy, of respecting others dignity, and therefore it is only positive. If we have to mortify our members, as St. Paul says, and guard our senses, it is because we value something that we want to keep. We want to keep this gift from God, which is holy purity.

When I was young, I was curious to know what the Federal Reserve Bank of New York was like. And I asked my father if he would go with me to the Federal Reserve Bank on a tour. Anyway, I found out that you couldn't just go there as in the museum, just walk in, you can't just walk into, you have to get a background check and they make an appointment with you two weeks later. So anyway, we did we did all that. And two weeks later, we got an appointment. And we went down there and we got a tour of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, which has the largest concentration of gold in the world, I think, at least back then. And it was very impressive, you can imagine, you know, for a boy to see where the gold is kept and everything. Anyway, they first took us to where they shred money. And they gave us, I don't know something like 1000s of dollars in shredded money just as a sample in a little little little bag or something. And of course it's worthless. But then they took us down to where the gold is kept. And if you go down, you have to go down five stories, and you really you're you're surrounded by the bedrock of Manhattan Island. And, and there's nothing else underneath it and there's nothing else around it. And it's kind of a maze that you go through. And they said that the Maze was made on purpose so that if anybody stole some gold bar, you know, from the safe the big safe, that they couldn't run through the maze physically even top speed before the big doors in the front closed because there were these huge doors that would close, it took two minutes to close. And anyway when we got to the safe the door, the gate, you know, was it's not like like ordinary safe door that swings open, it was really like like a big screw that has a little hallway through it. If you can imagine a 12 foot diameter screw with with a little hole through it, That's where you go through, that's the passageway and when it closes the door closes by screwing itself onto the ground so that passageway is now perpendicular to the hallway, so I mean there's no way you can get in or you know what you can get out. And then once you're on the other side in the big safe you have all sorts of gold cells, you know, it's kind of like like a prison and each cell has an account is an account you know a country or some very rich person or somebody who has gold bars and they just change money you know change a gold bars from one cell to the the other one they want to pay a debt or something like that doesn't go anywhere, just stays there. It's kind of fascinating. But, you know, I, when I came out of there, I realized this is an

exaggeration. This is exaggerated. It's incredible. And you know now thinking, thinking back and you know, with the Federal Reserve Bank, you, you ask yourself, why do they have this huge cell? Why? Why the 12 foot steel door? Why the, the the maze? Why the cells? Why the... why? Because gold is really valuable, you want to keep it, you don't want to lose it. So they exaggerate, they go, they go to great lengths, so that even if a nuclear bomb fell, the gold would be saved. I don't know, what would it be good for, but anyway, it's, it's safe.

Well, the same thing, I think, we have to take a similar attitude with holy purity, it's so valuable. If we really value it, we will keep it safe. And we will even exaggerate. You know, at times, it'll be it'll be cumbersome, because you got to walk down five stories, you have, to see this thing or, or you have to, you know, whatever, wait for this big door to open it. It just if there are sacrifices that people make for those things that are valuable to them, they're not going to carry gold bars in the subway, you know, kind of handing them out to be taken by anybody. You know, but that's what St. Josemaria says some people do with their hearts. He says in a point of *The Way*, "You give me the impression you are carrying your heart in your hands as if you were offering goods for sale. Who wants it? If it doesn't appeal to anyone, you'll decide to give it to God, you know. Do you think that's how the saints acted?" He asks. No, no, no, no. Our heart is something great, something valuable, and we have to keep it pure for God. We have to keep it pure. And therefore, you know, think today, how, what sacrifices do you make, do I make, for this in order for for me, for you, to keep the this very valuable gift from God? This virtue of purity. Sometimes that means not going on the internet. But I don't know, there's no one in the house and I have nothing to do. And I and the only thing I could think of is watching a movie on the internet. Well, you know what, if there's no one in the house, why tempt yourself? Why not wait? Well.... Yeah. Wait, wait for someone to come. Don't surf the internet alone because you said well, I don't have the intention of doing anything, then. No, but you never know when it's gonna come. And if you if you don't put safeguards, if you don't keep the battle far away from the fortress walls, then then it's gonna be, it's going to be close. And, you know, temptation may overtake the the, the the safeguards that we have placed. You know, and precisely not going on the internet alone is a good measure of prudence. Or, for instance, not being in the same room alone with somebody of the opposite sex. Hey, you know, it's like, wow, don't exaggerate. Well, but ,you know, she's my girlfriend, or he's my boyfriend. If it takes a big effort to guard the gold, to guard that which is valuable for us, we will actually go through sacrifices, even that. Think, you can always be with someone, quote unquote, alone, but not in a room absolutely alone, but maybe in a restaurant or maybe in a park in public, but you can have a private conversation. But these are, these are the things that we need to actually guard against, because when we get into these little things, then it's like a slippery slope. And these are not negative things. These are eminently positive, positive signs of struggle that we really value what we have been given. And we really value this virtue.

One of the things that the Catechism says is that purity requires modesty: an integral part of the virtue of temperance. What is modesty? Modesty, as St. Josemaria called this virtue, "the little sister of purity," it protects the intimate center of the person. It means the quote Catechism, "refusing to unveil that which should remain hidden. It is ordered to chastity to whose sensitivity it bears witness." So our, our intimacy, the our interior, our interiority, this world within, animals don't live in modesty, because they have no interiority. But when we develop a an inner world, and you know, of love, and we discover that we have a private side to us, not just all public, we've realized that we need to have a safeguard. And we can open up certain things to certain people in certain contexts, you know, like, our inner feelings or our desires, and not everything has to be public. And the same thing applies for our body, that we need to protect that. So that modesty also needs to inspire the way we dress, so that people can see a simple elegance of a child of God. That is not there to overdo, kind of, you know, the, the expensiveness of clothing or extravagance or anything like that, and, and it's not there to attract attention to himself or herself, it's just, it's there for the others. It's when we dress, we dress for the others. That's very important, even even in even in one's house, in one's household. You can say, "well I'm at home, I could let my hair down, so to speak." Yeah, but that doesn't mean we, we, we don't dress well at home, because, you know, our children will learn from us or, or, or the people we live with will need to be inspired as well, to live this virtue. And they will learn from what we do, what they see us doing.

Well, there's many manifestations of this virtue and they are all quite beautiful, but they do require sacrifice. And that is where we need to really make a commitment to living these sacrifices so that the valuable gift of purity can be safeguarded. Of course, with the grace of God, because without it, as St. Augustine found out, even when he wanted to live purity, he couldn't, until he received it as a gift from God.

Well, let us turn to Mary, who will help us to live this virtue, it will, it will be the virtue that will allow us to see her Son everywhere we go, and to follow him everywhere we go, just like she did. She was able to follow him, even at the foot of the cross, because she was able to see the Resurrection behind the Cross, because she lived purity of life. Mother of ours, help us to receive Our Lord, with the purity, the humility and devotion with which you received him the first time, with the spirit and the fervor of the saints.

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations which you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.