

The Way of St. Joseph



OBJECTIVE: The Way of St. Joseph is a three-month training regimen that helps men "To Order All Things to Christ" by devoting themselves wholeheartedly to living a life of virtue and holiness as an offering to Christ our Lord. Under the direction of their parish priest, men will grow strong in mind, body, and spirit by developing habits for holiness. This month, we will discuss why a man must become strong in mind to become a faithful disciple of our Lord.

Podcast Schedule

- Episode #5 – Strong in Mind
- Episode #6 – The Theological Life
- Episode #7 – Fight the Good Fight
- Episode #8 – Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Self

Episode #5 – Strong in Mind

I. Introduction

1. Why does a Catholic man have to be strong in mind?
2. Last month, we discussed why a man must become strong in body to free his mind and spirit to pursue higher and more noble goods. As I mentioned in previous episodes, this summer, we will break down the rule of life by discussing what it means to be strong in body, mind, and spirit.
3. This month, we will discuss why a man must become strong in mind to know and love the truth. As Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” The podcasts this month will cover:
 - a. Episode #5 – Strong in Mind
 - b. Episode #6 – The Theological Life
 - c. Episode #7 – Fight the Good Fight
 - d. Episode #8 – Knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Self
4. This week, we are going to discuss why a man needs to be strong in mind: Reason demands it, God commands it, and we need to develop the virtue of studiousness to be well-rounded Catholic men.

II. The Intellectual Life

1. Commitment: A firm commitment to religious, intellectual formation twice per week.
2. Justification
 - a. Reason Demands It
 - i. God created human beings with the capacity to reason for we are made in his image (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10) and it is our reasoning that separates us from “brute beasts” (Jude 10).
 - ii. Socrates said that, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” and we should proclaim that, “The unexamined faith is not worth believing.”
 - b. God Commands It
 - i. Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.

- ii. Philippians 4:8-9 – Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

3. Studiousness: The Virtue of the Intellectual Life

- a. A.G. Sertillanges – “The virtue proper to the man of study is, clearly, studiousness” (*The Intellectual Life*, 25).
- b. St. Thomas Aquinas – Studiousness “belongs to temperance to moderate the movement of the appetite, lest it tend excessively to that which is desired naturally. Now just as in respect of his corporeal nature man naturally desires the pleasures of food and sex, so, in respect of his soul, he naturally desires to know something; thus the Philosopher observes at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* i, 1: “All men have a natural desire for knowledge.” The moderation of this desire pertains to the virtue of studiousness; wherefore it follows that studiousness is a potential part of temperance, as a subordinate virtue annexed to a principal virtue” (II-II:166:2).
- c. The Two Vices Opposed to Studiousness
 - i. Negligence
 - ii. Vain Curiosity
 - 1. First, when a man learns things, he doesn’t need to know at the expense of what he is obligated to know.
 - 2. Second, when a man desires to know the truth about things without referring his knowledge to its due end, namely, the knowledge of God.
 - 3. Third, when a man studies to know the truth above the capacity of his own intelligence, by doing so men easily fall into error.

III. Application – Strong in Mind

- 1. Monthly Challenge: A firm commitment to religious, intellectual formation twice per week.
- 2. A.G. Sertillanges in *The Intellectual Life*
 - a. “Do something, or do nothing at all. Do ardently whatever you decide to do; do it with your might; and let the whole of your activity be a series of vigorous fresh starts. Half-work, which is half-rest, is good neither for rest nor for work” (96).
 - b. The principal question does not lie in the number of hours; but in their use and in the mind” (97).
 - c. “What do we need, in order to utilize this permanent life in the service of truth? Discipline only” (71).

Episode #6 – Faith, Reason, and Theology

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: What is the theological life, and do I have to have one?
2. Last week, we discussed why a man needs to be strong in mind: Reason demands it, God commands it, and we need to develop the virtue of studiousness to be well-rounded Catholic men.
3. This week, we will discuss how faith and reason contribute to the theological life, and I will give you some practical suggestions to help develop a life of the mind.

II. Faith, Reason, and Theology

1. Faith & Reason

- a. Pope St. John Paul II – “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth- in a word, to know himself- so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves” (*Fides et Ratio*, 1).
- b. CCC 50 – By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation.

2. Reason – Philosophy has two contributions to make to theology:

- a. First, philosophy helps to give an account of the foundations of the act of faith.
- b. Second, philosophy helps to explain and defend the faith.

3. Faith

- a. Faith is belief based on authority.
- b. What must a Catholic believe?
 - i. Everything that the Church teaches.
 - ii. We should know and believe the chief articles of faith (Creed), and especially those the knowledge of which is necessary for our salvation.

4. What is theology?

- a. St. Anselm - "Faith seeks understanding."

- b. St. Augustine – "I believe, in order to understand; and I understand, the better to believe" (CCC 158).
- c. Ludwig Ott defined theology as "the science of God" or "science of faith" (*Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, 1, 3).
- d. Theology seeks by human reason to penetrate supernatural truths revealed through the Deposit of Faith and to understand it as much as possible.

5. Division Within Theology

- a. Natural theology is the science of God as known by natural reason. Supernatural theology concerns what can be known by God by faith from Revelation.
- b. The entire field of theology is divided into dogmatic and moral theology, which differ in subject-matter and in method. Dogmatic theology concerns what one must *believe*. Moral theology concerns what one must *do*.

III. Application – Strong in Mind

- 1. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Mind – A firm commitment to religious, intellectual formation twice per week.
- 2. Suggestions for Study
 - a. Strong in Mind & Body – A.G. Sertillanges in *The Intellectual Life*
 - i. "‘A sound mind in a sound body’ remains the ideal. The thinker has a special physiology; he must look after it and not hesitate to take expert advice on the matter" (36).
 - ii. "A lover of pleasure is an enemy of his body and therefore quickly becomes an enemy of his soul. Mortification of the senses is necessary for thought, and can alone bring us to that state of clear vision" (39).
 - b. Tips
 - i. Go outside.
 - ii. Exercise regularly.
 - iii. Watch what you eat.
 - iv. Simplify your life.
 - v. Practice solitude and silence.

Episode #7 – Fight the Good Fight

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Are Catholic men obligated to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12)?
2. Last week, we discussed how faith and reason contribute to theological life, and I gave you some practical suggestions for developing a life of the mind.
3. This week, we are going to consider whether a Catholic man is obligated to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12)? I am going to introduce you to the discipline of apologetics and discuss why I think every Catholic man should learn to defend the faith.

II. Fight the Good Fight

1. The Ride of the Rohirrim

- a. In the third installment of the *Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King*, we see the famous Ride of the Rohirrim. At the point in the story, the forces of Mordor are at the gates of Minas Tirith and all seems to be lost. The citizens of Gondor have lost all hope, and they can only wait for impending doom to be visited upon them. At the moment, a horn sounds on a hill above the Pellannor Fields announcing the arrival of King Theoden and the Riders of Rohan who have come to Gondor’s aid. As the riders look upon Saruman’s great army, the king of Rohan, Theoden delivers a great speech.

- b. Theoden’s Speech:

Arise, arise, Riders of Théoden!

Fell deeds awake: fire and slaughter!

Spear shall be shaken, shield be splintered,

a sword-day, a red day, ere the sun rises!

Ride now, ride now!

Ride to Gondor!

With that he seized a great horn from Guthláf his banner-bearer, and he blew such a blast upon it that it burst asunder. And straightaway all the horns in the host were lifted up in music, and the blowing of the horns of Rohan in that hour was like a storm upon the plain and a thunder in the mountains.

Ride now, ride now! Ride to Gondor!

- c. Are you a citizen of Gondor or a Rider of Rohan?

2. Apologetics

- a. Theology – Theology is “the science of God” or “the science of faith” (Ott, 1, 3). This week, we will examine the discipline of apologetics.
- b. Apologetics
 - i. The discipline that deals with a rational defense of Christian faith.
 - ii. It comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means to give a reason or defense.
- c. Biblical Justification
 - i. 1 Peter 3:15 – In your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you.
 - ii. Jude 3 – Contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 – For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.
- d. The Three Main Questions
 - i. Does God exist?
 - ii. Who is Jesus Christ?
 - iii. Did Jesus Christ establish the Catholic Church?

III. Application – Strong in Mind

1. Protect the Young and Vulnerable: What three things are turning young people away from the Church?
 - a. Young people place a premium on personal choice (Individualism, Commercialism, and Relativism).
 - b. They believe that religion and science are incompatible.
 - c. Christianity is unfriendly to LGBTQ persons.
2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Mind – A firm commitment to religious, intellectual formation twice per week.

Episode #8 – Knowledge of God and Knowledge of Self

I. Introduction

1. Opening Question: Can we love what we do not know?
2. Last week, we considered whether a Catholic man is obligated to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12). I introduced you to the discipline of apologetics, and we discussed the reasons every Catholic man should learn to defend the faith to some degree.
3. This week, I want to finish our reflection this month by considering the reason why we must nourish the life of the mind to develop a rich interior life. Adolphe Tanquerey explains it well when he explains “Since perfection consists in the union of the soul with God, it becomes evident that in order to effect this union, we must be acquainted with its two terms, God and the soul” (*The Spiritual Life*, 213).

II. The Knowledge of God and Self

1. The Intellectual Life & Religion – A.G. Sertillanges in *The Intellectual Life*
 - a. “Intelligence only plays its part fully when it fulfills a religious function, that is, when it worships the supreme Truth in its minor and scattered appearances. Each truth is a fragment which does not stand alone but reveals connections on every side. Truth in itself is one, and the Truth is God” (30).
 - b. “The true is the glory of God: [a man] must keep it always in mind, submit to it in everything” (68).
 - c. “Study has been called a prayer to truth. Now prayer, the Gospel tells us, must be uninterrupted: “We ought always to pray and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). . . . We ought always to pray is the same as saying: we must always desire eternal things, the temporal things which serve the eternal, our daily bread of every kind and for every need, life in all its fullness earthly and heavenly. Apply this commentary to the active prayer which study is, and you will arrive at a most valuable consideration” (69-70).
2. Knowledge of God – We cannot love what we do not know.
 - a. Adolphe Tanquerey – “Concerning God, we must know whatever can render Him admirable and lovable. We must learn of His existence, His nature, His attributes, His works, above all, His inner life and His relations with us. Nothing that concerns the Godhead is foreign to devotion” (433).
 - b. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*
 - i. “Contemplation is general is a simple, intellectual view of the truth, superior to reasoning and accompanied by admiration” (221).

- ii. “The contemplation of the faithful is “a simple and loving knowledge of God and of His works which is the fruit of our personal activity aided by grace” (222).
- c. Means of Acquiring Knowledge of God
 - i. The Devout Study of Theology
 - ii. Meditation or Mental Prayer
 - iii. Habit of Seeing God in all Things

3. Knowledge of Self

- a. Adolphe Tanquerey – “The knowledge of God leads us directly to love Him, since He is infinitely lovable. The knowledge of self helps us indirectly to love God by disclosing to us the absolute need we have of Him, in order to perfect the qualities with which He has endowed us and to heal our deep miseries” (447).
- b. The Necessity of Self-Knowledge – Adolphe Tanquerey (448-449)
 - i. “If we lack self-knowledge, it is morally impossible to perfect ourselves. The reason is that we then entertain illusions concerning our state, and, according to our character or our changing moods, we fall either into a presumptuous optimism that makes us believe we are already perfect, or into discouragement that causes us to exaggerate our faults.”
 - ii. “An honest and accurate knowledge of ourselves, on the contrary, is an incentive to perfection. The good qualities we discover move us to thank God and to show our gratitude by generous co-operation with His grace. Our defects and the realization of our helplessness show us how much we have yet to accomplish, and how important it is to lose no opportunity of advancing.”
- c. Means of Acquiring Self-Knowledge
 - i. Assess Your Natural Gifts – Mind, Will, Character, and Habits
 - ii. Assess Your Supernatural Gifts – Whether grace disposes us to certain virtues, decisive moments in your spiritual life when God spoke clearly and decisively, and the various ways we have resisted grace.
 - iii. Examination of Conscience

III. Application – Strong in Mind

1. Start Keeping the Rule – Keep the rule in its entirety. Keep the rule in a Christian manner.
2. Monthly Challenge: Strong in Mind – A firm commitment to religious, intellectual formation twice per week.