

St. Joseph Society



Objective: Spiritual Theology has been referred to as the science of the saints. It can also be referred to as the science of Christian perfection. Spiritual theology attempts to guide the soul from the very beginning of the Christian life through the purgative, illuminative, and unitive way. Over the next six months, we will investigate this “science of the spiritual life” as we discover an authentic Catholic male spirituality.

Unit 3 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #9 – The Perfection of the Christian Life
- Episode #10 – The Life of Grace
- Episode #11 – The Interior Means of Perfection
- Episode #12 – The Exterior Means of Perfection

I. Episode #9 – The Perfection of the Christian Life

1. Universal Call to Holiness – “All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (Lumen Gentium, 40).
2. The Duty of Tending to Perfection – “You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).
3. The Nature of Christian Perfection – St. Thomas Aquinas explains that Christian perfection, “Primarily and essentially the perfection of the Christian life consists in charity, principally as to the love of God, secondarily as to the love of our neighbor” (ST II-II, q. 184, a. 3). “All perfection consists in the love of God and of the neighbor for God’s sake” (Tanqueray, 160).

II. Episode #10 – The Life of Grace

1. Grace, Justification, & Merit – **Grace** is a participation in the life of God (CCC 1997). **Justification** as “the transition from the state in which man is born as the son of the first Adam to the state of grace and adoption as sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Saviour” (Ott, 269; DH 1524). **Merit** indicates that “By his good works the justified man really acquires a claim to supernatural reward from God” (Ott, 284).

2. Actual and Habitual Grace – “Sanctifying grace is a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. **Habitual grace**, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from **actual graces**, which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification” (CCC 2000).

III. Episode #11 – The Interior Means of Perfection

1. The Precepts of the Church: The Bare Minimum (CCC 2041-2043)
2. Desire of Perfection – “The road to perfection is arduous and implies constant and energetic efforts, for as we have remarked, no one can make progress in the path of God’s love without sacrifice . . . No one ever enters upon any steep, rugged path unless he is possessed of an ardent desire of arriving at the goal . . . No one starts on the way to perfection or perseveres in it unless sustained by a strong desire to reach the end” (Tanquerey, 206).
3. Knowledge of God and Man – Knowledge of God is absolutely necessary because a person cannot love what he does not know. Hence, studying theology is necessary to becoming holy. If we lack self-knowledge, then it is morally impossible to perfect ourselves.
4. Conformity to God’s Will – “Conformity to the will of God consists in a loving, total, and intimate submission and harmony of our will with that of God in everything he disposes or permits in our regard” (Aumann, 366).
5. Prayer – Prayer is “an elevation of our soul to God to offer Him our homage (worship) and ask His favors (petition), in order to grow in holiness for His glory . . . the sanctifying power of prayer is such that the Saints never tired of saying that he lives well who prays well” (Tanquerey, 243, 251-252).

IV. Episode #12 – The Exterior Means of Perfection

1. Spiritual Direction – Pope Leo XIII: “God in His infinite Providence has decreed that men for the most part should be saved by men; hence, He has appointed that those whom He calls to a loftier degree of holiness should be led thereto by men, ‘in order that,’ as Chrysostom says, ‘we should be taught by God through men’” (Tanquerey, 257).
2. Spiritual Reading – “Spiritual reading is not purely for reasons of study; it is an exercise of piety. Although it is true that one derives much instruction through the reading of spiritual books, the ultimate purpose is to arouse one’s love of God and to intensify one’s desire for perfection. Hence the important thing is not to read many books but to assimilate what is read” (Aumann, 377).
3. Holy Friendships – “A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure. There is nothing so precious as a faithful friend, and no scales can measure his excellence. A faithful friend is an elixir of life; and those who fear the Lord will find him” (Sirach 6:14-16).
4. Rule of Life – A rule of life must be observed in a Christian manner; namely, the rule should be followed to do the will of God and express our love to Him. A rule must be at once firm and flexible.