

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 5 Podcast Schedule

- Episode #18 – Introduction to the Illuminative Way
- Episode #19 – Prayer of the Proficient
- Episode #20 – The Moral Virtues
- Episode #21 – The Theological Virtues
- Episode #22 – The Counter-Attacks of the Enemy

I. Episode #18 – The Illuminative Way

1. The Nature and Goal of the Illuminative Way – The illuminative way “is thus named because the great aim of the soul is now the imitation, the Following of Christ, by the positive exercise of the Christian virtues” (Tanqueray, 454). The main differences between the purgative and the illuminative way is that beginners struggle against sin and its causes, while the souls in progress also practice penance and mortification, but they struggle to become more like our Lord. The goal of the Illuminative Way is to follow Christ by the imitation of His virtues.
2. The Program to be Followed – First, a man needs to make Christ the center of his thoughts. This knowledge will lead to greater love of God wherein Jesus becomes the center of his affections. Eventually, the love of God leads him to imitating our Lord. Second, he needs to practice affective prayer and practice the moral and theological virtues so that his actions may not be based on his emotions but on deep-rooted convictions.

II. Episode #19 – Prayer of the Proficient

1. The Nature of Affective Prayer – Affective prayer is that form of prayer in which the will takes precedence over the intellect. “Affective prayer devout affections predominate whereby we express to God our love and our desire of glorifying Him. . . . Beginners need to acquire convictions so they give more attention to reasoning rather than affections. In time, his affections will grow and his prayer life will start to transition” (Tanqueray, 461-462).

2. Means of Fostering Affections in Prayer – Exercise the virtue of charity will move us to admire the infinite beauty, goodness, and loving mercy of God. Meditate frequently on the great truths that recall to us what God has done for us.

III. Episode #20 – The Moral Virtues

1. Virtues & Vices – Vices are bad dispositions that lead one to act in ways that do not perfect a person or help them acquire a state of well-being that a human being is capable of. Virtues, on the other hand, are abilities, tendencies, or capacities that enable one to act in ways that contribute to their flourishing or functioning to their advantage, thereby satisfying their needs. A virtue is an acquired habit or ability that enables a person to act well. In Catholic moral theology, there is a distinction between natural (acquired) and infused virtues.
2. The Cardinal Virtues – Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance

IV. Episode #21 – The Theological Virtues

1. The Nature and Role of the Theological Virtues – “A good habit of the mind or will, supernaturally infused into the soul, whose immediate object is God. The theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity.”¹ The role of the theological virtues “is to unite us to God through Jesus Christ, in order to make us sharers in the Divine life. They are, then, at once unifying and transforming virtues” (Tanqueray, 550).
2. Practicing Charity – For current or future fathers, whether domestic or ecclesial, what are you doing to exercise St. Paul’s admonition to the head of the Christian household, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27)?

V. Episode #22 – The Counter-Attacks of the Enemy

1. The Re-Awakening of the Capital Sins: The Inclination to Pride, Sensuality, and Spiritual Avarice
2. Lukewarmness
 - a. “Lukewarmness consists in a sort of spiritual languor which saps the energies of the will, inspires one with a horror for effort and thus leads to the decline of the Christian life. . . . The special danger of this state consists in the gradual weakening of the soul’s energies, a condition fraught with more danger than the commission of some isolated mortal sin” (Tanqueray, 592-596).
 - b. The effects of lukewarmness include the blinding of conscience, a gradual weakening of the will that can reach the point one loathes effort, and this can be difficult to repair because it occurs almost insensibly.
 - c. The remedies of lukewarmness – Men need to be converted by going to confession often, returning to the fervent practice of the exercises of piety (ex. Prayer, examination of conscience, doing God’s will), and start practicing the virtues and fulfilling the duties of one’s state in life.

¹Fr. John Hardon. *Catholic Dictionary*. (New York: An Image Book, 2013).
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