

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.

I. Episode #23 – Introduction to the Unitive Way

1. The goal of the unitive way is “none other than habitual and intimate union with God, through Jesus Christ . . . To live altogether unto God . . . the Most Blessed Trinity dwelling in us, to praise God, serve Him, revere Him and love Him . . . The aim of the perfect Christian” (Tanqueray, 1290).
2. Four Characteristics of the Unitive Way (Tanqueray, 1292-1295)
 - a. **he soul lives continually in the presence of God;** it delights to contemplate Him living in the heart, “to walk inwardly with God.”
 - b. **The love of God becomes not only the principal virtue of the soul,** but, one may say, its only virtue, in the sense that all the other virtues which it practices are for it but so many acts of love.
 - c. **Prayer becomes increasingly simple.** Reasoning disappears to make room for pious sentiments, which in turn become simpler, until they become but a loving, lingering thought of God.
 - d. **A simplification of our whole life.** Life becomes a perpetual prayer: whether working or recreating, we continually rise towards God by conforming our will to His.

III. Episode #24 – The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

1. The Nature of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit – The Gifts of the Holy Ghost “are infused dispositions which make a man promptly docile to divine inspirations. They have traditionally been compared to the sails of a ship, enabling the ship to be moved by wind – which represents the inspirations of the Holy Ghost” (*The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, Vol. 1, p. 496).
2. What is the difference between infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Ghost? – “The virtues incline us to act in accordance with the nature of our faculties . . . The virtues are therefore energies that are primarily and directly active. The gifts on the contrary impart to us a docility and a receptiveness that enable us to receive and follow the motions of operating grace” (*The Spiritual Life*, 1309).

IV. Episode #25 – The Perfection of the Intellect and Will

1. The Perfection of the Practical Intellect (Aumann, 279-280)
 - a. Virtue (Prudence) & Gift: Counsel – Enables one to judge rightly in particular events what ought to be done in view of the supernatural ultimate end and personal sanctification.

- b. Predispositions to Cultivate the Gift of Counsel
 - i. Profound Humility, Reflection, and Patience
 - ii. Ability to Listen to God's Voice
 - iii. Docility and Obedience.
2. The Perfection of the Will (Aumann, 293-296)
- a. Virtue (Justice) & Gift: Piety – Fills a person with a profound love of God and for all men and women as brothers and sisters and as children of the same heavenly Father.
 - b. Predispositions to cultivate the Gift of Piety
 - i. To cultivate the spirit of adopted children of God
 - ii. To cultivate the spirit of universal kinship toward all humanity
 - iii. To consider all things, even material things, as pertaining to the house of God

V. Episode #26 – The Perfection of the Appetites

- 1. The Perfection of the Irascible Appetite
 - a. Virtue (Fortitude) & Gift: Fortitude – Strengthens the soul for the practice of virtue, with invincible confidence of overcoming any dangers or difficulties that may arise. The most unmistakable mark of distinction between the virtue and gift of fortitude is the confidence one experiences in being able to overcome great dangers and difficulties with the latter.
 - b. Predispositions to Cultivate Fortitude
 - i. To accustom ourselves to the exact fulfillment of our duties despite any repugnance
 - ii. Not to ask God to remove our cross but only that he gives us the strength to carry it
 - iii. To practice voluntary mortification faithfully
- 2. The Seven Gifts: Sensitive Appetites – Concupiscible Appetites (Aumann, 305-306)
 - a. Virtue (Temperance) & Gift: Fear of the Lord – Perfect the virtue of hope by motivating a person to avoid sin out of reverential fear of God. To reach the perfection of the Christian life and the most intimate possible union with God, it is necessary that the concupiscible appetite be not only controlled but also purified.
 - b. Predispositions to cultivate Temperance
 - iv. Cultivate a love of solitude, recollection, and the faithful practice of mental prayer.
 - v. Be vigilant in keeping custody of the senses and making acts of love of God
 - vi. Do all things for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. I am running a few minutes late; my previous meeting is running over.

VI. Episode #27 – The Prayer of the Perfect

- 1. The Prayer of Simplicity – The prayer of simplicity is “a simple loving gaze upon some divine object, whether on God himself or one of his perfections, on Christ or on one of his mysteries, or on some other Christian truth . . . The prayer is ascetical, meaning that the soul is able to attain to this type of prayer by its own efforts with the help of ordinary grace, but often it is the transition point to mystical prayer. The prayer of simplicity is thus the bridge between ascetical and mystical prayer” (Aumann, 327).
- 2. Contemplation – “Contemplative prayer differs from discursive or reasoned prayer, since it excludes long reasonings; it differs, too, from affective prayer, because it excludes the multiplicity of acts which characterize this latter. Contemplative prayer, then, may be defined as a simple and affective gaze on God or things divine” (Tanquerey, 605).