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“Warm the chill” – Fighting Lukewarmness (Part 2)

Last week, we took a look at a spiritual illness that many Christians suffer and have suffered throughout the ages known as “*Lukewarmness*.” St. Thomas defines lukewarmness as “*a certain sadness, causing a person to be slow in performing spiritual acts because of the effort they require.*”¹ Similar to the treatment of a physical ailment, once we have identified the problem and a cause or two for its development we want to consider how it is we may begin to heal.

One spiritual writer proposes the following as a principle cause of this tepid attitude towards God and neighbor saying: “*Lukewarmness arises from prolonged neglect in the interior life. It is always preceded by numerous small unfaithful acts. Unless these are repented of, the guilt weighs heavily on the relationship of such a soul with God.*”² If a neglect of the interior or spiritual life, is a principal cause of lukewarmness then it would seem to be a good place to start in treating the illness. What makes for a healthy spiritual life then? These practices aren’t hard to imagine either as they are the bread and butter of any saint-in-the-making, namely: prayer and the sacraments.

First, *prayer*. Prayer is nothing more nor less than the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.³ The simplest forms of prayer that come down to us are that of *vocal prayer*, prayers we make with our voice, and *mental prayer* or meditation, prayer which we enter into with our mind. Many of us learn those foundational vocal prayers as children: The Our Father, the Hail Mary etc. In time, these prayers ought to be complimented by and lead us to a more mature conversation with God found in mental prayer.

This more mature time with God, 15-20 minutes or more in practice, that not only do we have a chance to tell God what is on our mind or heart, but allow him to speak to us in turn and tell us what is on his. This kind of prayer may be facilitated by passage from the bible, the mysteries of the rosary or some other holy subject, for example those same vocal prayers we learned as children. It is this sort of prayer too that helps us to begin seeing our life and work with supernatural eyes – having meaning not only here but hereafter too.

Second, the *sacraments*. We’ll focus especially on two of the seven we might receive in the course of the Christian life: Eucharist and Reconciliation. Whenever we find ourselves in a spiritual rut it is a good idea to begin our recovery by making a good confession. There we might lay our soul bare before the divine physician through the medium of his priests and consider prayerfully where we stand before God and neighbor, especially if we are conscious of mortal sin. Freed of the muck of sin, that blinds our eyes to God and his glory we do well to approach our Lord in the blessed sacrament, what the saints call the “*medicine of immortality.*”⁴ Another

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1 q.63 a.2

² Ibid.

³ CCC 2559

⁴ CCC 1331

spiritual writer advised souls, desirous of knowing and sharing Christ's love for his people, to draw near to the furnace of the tabernacle, the source of all power.

The Christian Life is full of challenges both great and small. A healthy spiritual life can be a great help in making every challenge a true joy. ***“Lord send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth!”***⁵ ~Fr. Matthew Biedrzycki

⁵ Cf. Ps 104:30