

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Life in Christ - Part 6: Gluttony - Oh, I Am SO Full!

For the last couple of weeks, we have been discussing the disordered affections that emanate from the Capital Sin of Avarice. These disordered affections pertain to the unhealthy desire for the blessings of this world. Last week, we explored the disordered affection for another person, which we describe as the Capital Sin of Lust. This week, we will focus on another related sin, which pertains mostly to the disordered affection for food and drink, known as the Capital Sin of Gluttony.

Let's begin with a definition of gluttony. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines Gluttony as "excess in eating or drinking" and "greedy or excessive indulgence." We can see from this definition that even secular sources, like *Merriam-Webster*, relate Gluttony and Greed (Avarice). As we learned in our discussion of Avarice, one of the sources of Avarice is a philosophy of scarcity. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, Life in Christ - Part 4: Avarice - Greed is NOT Good, Mar. 17, 2019] When one believes that there is not enough to go around, one might try to take more than her share. There is a story in Exodus about manna that demonstrates this issue of the fear of running out. In Exodus 16, God rained down manna for the people. They were commanded by God to take just enough for the day. Some gathered more than they should and saved the extra for the next day. What they saved turned bad and was full of maggots by morning. [EX 16:13-27]

We can see from this example that Gluttony is a sin against God, because it denies trust in God. Remember that we pray in the Our Father, "Give us THIS day our DAILY bread." In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul goes so far as to say, "For

many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their 'shame.' Their minds are occupied with earthly things." [Phil 3:18-19]

In addition, Gluttony is a sin against the love of neighbor. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], we see the definition of all sin, which certainly applies to the sin of Gluttony, "Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity." [CCC, 1849] Gluttony stems from the sin of Pride, which we have learned fools us into believing that we are more entitled to blessings than our neighbor. [cf. *Looking Through Stained Glass*, Life in Christ - Part 2: Pride - Good For You?, Feb. 24, 2019]

How do we counter the effects of Gluttony? We do so by the Lenten practices of fasting and almsgiving. Fasting helps us to learn self-control. It helps us to put the blessings of this life in perspective. We learned from St. Paul above that for gluttons, "their God is their belly." Fasting helps us to get our disordered appetites back in order, so that the one true God can be our God again. Almsgiving can also help us to counter the effects of Gluttony, teaching us that the philosophy of scarcity is a farce. In reality, there is plenty for all of us. Through Almsgiving, we contribute to the just distribution of resources. Almsgiving also teaches us to trust in God, rather than our own store of material goods.

Next week, we will explore our final Capital Sin, Sloth.

