

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom

Life in Christ - Part 8: Sloth - If I Could Just "Snooze" 10 More Minutes

During these last six weeks, we have been exploring the Capital Sins and have discussed each of them, except for one, Sloth. Perhaps it's apropos that we've left Sloth for last. After all, procrastination is a consequence of Sloth. Like many of the Capital Sins that we have discussed so far, Sloth can have a physical and/or a spiritual component. For example, one can be slothful in one's daily life or slothful in prayer.

How can laziness be a sin? Who is the slothful person hurting? The reality is that Sloth can hurt ourselves, others, and even God. Let's start by looking at how Sloth can affect our relationship with God. In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), we are told that we can sin against God's love through Sloth, which "goes so far as to refuse the joy that comes from God and to be repelled by divine goodness." [CCC, 2094] As we approach Holy Week, we might recall one of the great examples of spiritual Sloth from Scripture, which takes place on Holy Thursday night. When Jesus takes His Apostles to the Garden of Gethsemane, He asks them to watch and wait with Him, and they fall asleep. "When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, 'So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'" [MT 26:40-41] The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. This quote speaks to the Sloth that affects many people as they allow their prayer to slowly subside from twice a day to once a day to once a week to "when was the last time I prayed."

Sloth isn't, however, just a spiritual laziness. It also affects our relationship with other people. As we discussed above, Sloth can affect our reception of God's love, but it can also affect how we share God's love with others. We are called to work together for the mission of Jesus Christ, to share the Good News in word and deed. St. Paul has some particularly harsh words for those who do not actively work to spread the Gospel. "We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly [...]. But you, brothers, do not be remiss in doing good." [2 Thes 3:11-13] Sloth, therefore, can also be seen as the sin of not loving our neighbor.

When we damage our relationship with God or others through sin, we hurt ourselves as well. So, what can we do to counteract the effects of Sloth? Once again we can turn to some of the pillars of Lenten practice, specifically Prayer and Almsgiving. Keeping the daily practice of prayer can help us not to slip into the sin of Acedia, or spiritual Sloth. Almsgiving can help us share God's love with others. This is particularly true when we give of our precious time to those who are in need.

Thus, we have briefly explored all seven Capital Sins. For the next two weeks, we will take a break from our exploration of "Life in Christ" to discuss Holy Week and Easter. After Easter, we will pick back up again by exploring the Theological and Cardinal Virtues.

