

One

The Sixth Beatitude is, “Blessed are the Pure of Heart, for they shall see God.”

To be pure of heart does not mean those who never experience temptation. Even Jesus was tempted. And it does not mean we will never have an impure thought like pride, lust, anger, or resentment. To be pure of heart means to have the powers of our soul healed and reintegrated by the power of Jesus we receive from the Eucharist combined with our effort through mental prayer and a resolution.

“But wait, Mike, I don’t even know what the powers of the soul are or how they are supposed to work?”

There are three powers in the soul, the **intellect**, the **feelings**, and the **will**. They were designed to work in this way: **The intellect** perceives or becomes aware of reality through the five senses, the imagination or the memory. The intellect then presents its perception of reality to the feelings as “this is right and good for me” or “this is wrong and bad for me.” **The feelings** respond to what the Intellect presented with, “I like this,” prompting the will to choose it; or “I dislike that,” prompting the will to avoid it. **The will** chooses the apparent good and avoids the evil.

Thinking should inform our feelings which prompt our choices.

Thinking should rule our lives, not feeling. The feelings are meant to be good servants but if left in charge they become very bad masters.

Two

Original Sin wounded the three powers of our soul.

Our intellect has been darkened, so now we suffer from ignorance, confusion, and intellectual laziness. It takes a lot of effort to really think things through. It's easier to feel. So, we let the intellect go to sleep and let our feelings determine our behavior. We let feelings rule our life. We are ruled by likes and dislikes. That might be okay except for the fact that, because of Original Sin, we tend to like what is bad for us and dislike what is good for us.

Then we justify our behavior simply on the basis of what we like and dislike rather than on what is actually true and good and beautiful.

Now, we may not be able or willing to see this in ourselves but we certainly have a keen ability to see it and point it out in others.

The bottom line is this, if I just do what I feel like, well, that makes one heck of a mess, doesn't it?

Three

We are ruled by our feelings which tend to like what is bad for us and dislike what is good for us. But we can change the way we feel by how we think.

This practice will start to get the soul back in order.

Let's say, for instance, you really dislike someone. Your bad feelings for him are making it really hard. Begin with your thinking. Think and talk about his good points, his virtues, and maybe especially the gifts he has that you don't. If you think and talk about the person in those terms long enough, you'll be constantly reminded of how much there is to appreciate about this person, and you'll actually begin to appreciate him and it'll be easier to treat him charitably. Thinking changes feeling.

Again, you should use this strategy to avoid evil. Say you want to gossip about someone. You can picture in your head how awkward it'd be if what you've been saying gets back to that person. Or you can use St. James' image, about how a small flame – gossip – can burn down a whole forest of good. Whatever image works to help you realize how deadly gossip is, use that, focus on that, picture that. And eventually, your desire to gossip will fade.

If we think about the pleasing aspects of what's good and the displeasing aspects of what's bad our desires will change prompting the right action.

Four

We can also change the way we feel by how we act.

Most people don't start out liking exercise, but if they keep at it they begin to look forward to their morning run. People usually don't start out enjoying prayer, but if they pray anyway, day after day, they get to the point where they can't do without it.

The same goes for abstaining from bad behavior you're inclined to. If you have a bad temper, you'll want to say horrible things when you get angry. But if you resist the urge to lash out and choose to hold your tongue, the anger will fade and the desire to be undisturbed by others will grow.

If you resist the wrong feelings and do the right actions long enough, the bad desires will fade and the right desires will grow, prompting you to the right actions.

Choose to do the right action even if you don't feel like it. If you do the right thing, over and over, eventually you begin to like it – it becomes pleasing to the emotions and then we have a good habit.

Five

Our Soul can be healed but we must go to Jesus.

We can't heal ourselves. Jesus can if we will let him in.

So, the first step is just to be honest and say, "Jesus, I feel overwhelmed. Jesus, I feel angry or anxious or bored. Jesus, I feel lust or shame or whatever... Jesus, I surrender this to you."

Acknowledging how you feel is an important step to get control of it because then you are forced to think about it. That gets the intellect, our thinking back involved. And before it wasn't and that was a big part of the problem. Now that you start to think through it you probably see all kinds of good reasons why that feeling shouldn't determine your behavior.

Now you are in a good position to take some action, to resolve to do something different. That gets the will involved.

This is the whole process of mental prayer. We go to Jesus, then we think about things, and then we make a resolution to act differently. In this threefold process of going to Jesus, thinking things over, and choosing to act according to the right thinking, we put the feelings in their proper place and all three powers of the soul begin to integrate and act properly.

This is how we reintegrate the soul and become pure of heart! This is how Jesus begins to act through you to transform your mental prayer and a resolution.