

# Theory 7

# ACEDIA – THE OBSTACLE TO THE SIMPLE WAY OF LIFE

## The Deadly Sin of Our Age Is Acedia

The CCC (1023) and 1 John 3:2 teach us that Heaven means primarily to *be like God* by grace and the practice of virtue. God created every person for this high calling. The only way you won't reach it is if you don't want to and you refuse to do your part.

The deadly sin of sloth or acedia is to have an aversion to this high calling.

- A. Sloth is a sorrow or boredom with the spiritual life. It's being bored with the things of God which results in a spiritual apathy or complacency. This is when you don't like spiritual things like prayer, rooting out vice, practicing virtue, or talking about God and ultimate things like heaven – basically of everything that matters most.
- B. It results in the effort to *escape* the invitation to become god-like through busyness, workaholism, entertainment, news, sports, drunkenness, drug use, pornography, or sex.

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“Acedia is a sadness or sorrow that lacks courage for the great things that are proper to the nature of the Christian. It is a kind of anxious vertigo that befalls the human individual when he becomes aware of the height to which God has raised him. One who is trapped in acedia has neither the courage nor the will to be as great as he really is. He would prefer to be less great in order thus to avoid the obligation of greatness.”  
– Joseph Pieper

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### Two symptoms of sloth:

- A. Busyness
- B. Distraction otherwise known as idleness

Both are a kind of restlessness. When you are restless, it means you are not at peace with the state of your life, which is supposed to be an image of God destined for glory. And if you are not on that track to become a saint, you are going to be restless.

The way you cope with being restless is by trying to take your mind off it either by busyness, distraction, or entertainment, for example, Netflix binging or the constant need for new experiences through travel.

## Four Antidotes to Acedia or Sloth

- A. Rest through daily meditation
- B. Detach from what is “killing” you
- C. Follow a rule of life
- D. Build spiritual friendship

### **A. Rest or stillness to refocus your perspective on the purpose of life, which is union with God and to become a saint.**

- a. Daily meditation is the first antidote.
- b. Practice rest, silence, and stillness to think about and remember the ultimate things: the purpose of life, union with God, that this life will end in death, that this life is only a passageway to our true homeland, Heaven, to recall the great love of Christ and God the Father for us, and to think about His life presented in the Gospel.

### **B. Detach from feeding our senses.**

- a. Take a break from the pleasure of filling our senses of sight, sound, taste, scent, and touch. We are not spiritually hungry because we are stuffed to the gills with filling the desires of the body. We need to fast from feeding the desires of the body to grow in our spiritual hunger.
- b. Remember - Acedia or sloth is the enslavement that results from seeking our identity and worth in accomplishments from work. This causes us to be over-busy, overwhelmed, and exhausted leaving us with the desire to escape through distraction. Day after day we repeat the cycle.

Cut out the things that are killing your spiritual life – basically the time we spend on screens: T.V, Netflix, Facebook, YouTube, news, sports, Candy Crush and porn.

If we don't cut it out, we will be spiritually dead because acedia kills hope. If we do cut out the things that are killing us spiritually and replace them with a beautiful way of life, we will gain back our humanity, become what we were meant to be, and reach unbelievable happiness and peace. Replace negative input with what your soul really needs.

### **C. A rule of life helps to conquer sloth.**

- a. A rule of life is a plan, strategy, schedule or structure – whatever you want to call it – to help you get the good things you need each day to be happy. I like to call it a Recipe for Life.

Every recipe needs:

- The right ingredients

- In their right order
- In the right proportion

The ingredients to be happy and fully alive:

- Physical needs – sleep, food, water, shelter, **coffee**
- Friendship with God through sacraments and prayer
- Relationships with family and friends
- Achievement through meaningful work inside the home and out. Meaningful work is not limited to a job. Work is any way we do good for the world and for others. Recall the corporal and spiritual WORKS of mercy, for example, spending time with someone who is alone.
- Knowledge
- Beauty

We need all of these, but we must keep them in order.

- Love the lesser things less
- Love the greater things more
- Virtue is rightly ordered love

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“Put first things first and we get the second things thrown in; put second things first and we lose both first and second things.” – C.S. Lewis

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### Rule of Life

- a. Physical Needs
  - Sleep 6-8 hrs/day
  - Personal hygiene 30 min/day
  - Eat 2 hrs/day
  - Exercise 30 min 3-5 days/week plus the commute to gym if necessary = 1hr
- b. Friendship with Christ
  - 30 min/day in Meditation/Rosary
  - Frequent the Eucharist and Reconciliation
- c. Human Relationships/Friendship
  - 30 minutes of quality time with spouse/day
  - 30 minutes of quality time with kids/friends
- d. Meaningful Work 8-10 hrs/day
  - In the home or out
  - 1 hour for your commute
- e. Knowledge - Learn about what interests you.
- f. Experience beauty in its many forms.
- g. Individuality – The unique way you pursue each good.
- h. Be creative in combining two or more of these at one time (walking and talking with a spouse).

## Our Problem

- We have too much of some ingredients
- Too little of others
- And in some instances - the wrong ingredients

We need to think about what ingredients we need

- Choose those and eliminate others
- Create a recipe, rule, or plan of life, that is, a structure that enables you to live a well-rounded life

## **D. Spiritual Friendship**

- a. A very practical help to overcome sloth is having friends who are pursuing greatness and holiness because the people we hang out with tend to rub off on us.
- b. First, we must make the choice to be this kind of friend for others – especially for those who are in our life already.
  - Commit to daily meditation and the practice of virtue so you can be a better person for others.
  - Then make the choice to be more grateful, joy-filled and hopeful because everyone wants to be around that kind of person.
- c. Friends that help us to holiness are hard to find. It takes initiative and effort on our part. Pray to the Holy Spirit to lead you to holy friends.