The Virtue Chronicles

Purity

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The Prince and The Tiger

"Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

A Sermon for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

A Persian prince went out hunting one day. He had a good day because he killed the largest tiger in the forest. He brought the tiger's cub home with him as a pet, and a wonderful pet it was. Every day, he would play with the tiger cub and take it with him wherever he went. Even when the tiger grew bigger, the prince took it along. It grew to full size and even then the prince would walk through the streets with his tame tiger on a chain. The tiger was so gentle that children used to pat him on the head.

One day the prince was playing and wrestling with his strange pet. By accident, it scratched him, and drew blood. As soon as the tiger had tasted blood it turned on his master and tore him to pieces.

So it is with sins of impurity. Once our lower instincts are aroused, they can get the better of us, if we are not careful. In matters of purity, we should watch out for beginnings. We should be on our guard for littles sins of impurity which can easily lead to bigger ones. We must remember never to put our purity in danger because impurity is like a tiger which can eat us up once it has tasted blood. Don't feed the tiger blood.

While hunting one day, a hunter saw an ermine. An ermine, as you know, is an animal with beautiful white fur. The white fur of the ermine is very highly prized by hunters because it is used to make ermine wraps and coats. This hunter chased the ermine to a place where he could catch it, to a place where it would have to cross a swamp. Between the animal and safety lay a field of mud and ooze.

Rather than plunge into the filth and stain its beautiful white coat, the ermine ran around the swamp. It risked death rather than stain its white coat. No wonder the fur of the ermine is worn by kings and cardinals. Our purity is much like a white coat which we should guard against all stain.

From these two stories we can learn two lessons. First of all, to resist beginnings and not to feed the tiger blood. Second, to protect our purity from all stain. Christ said, "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." He also said, "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."

The reason Christ loves children so much is that they are clean of heart. You should not do anything that would make you less attractive to Christ.

A good prayer that will help you is the prayer of the leper in the Gospel today: "Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean."

Prayer

Deign, O Immaculate Virgin, Mother most pure, to accept the loving cry of praise which we send up to thee from the depths of our hearts. Though they can but add little to thy glory, O Queen of Angels, thou dost not despise, in thy love, the praises of the humble and the poor. Cast down upon us a glance of mercy, O most glorious Queen: graciously receive our petitions. Through thy immaculate purity of body and mind, which rendered thee so pleasing to God, inspire us with a love of innocence and purity. Teach us to guard carefully the gifts of grace, striving ever after sanctity, so that, being made like unto the image of thy beauty, we may be worthy to become the sharers of thy eternal happiness. Amen.

~ St. Paschasius

The Bleeding Crucifix

"Father, please tell us something that will make us love lilies."

This mysterious question was asked by a group of children who were gathered round Father John. The priest, however, understood. He had spoken to them a few days before about the lily of holy purity. And this is the way they asked for something that would help

"Chastity is the lily among virtues and makes men almost equal to angels." ~ Saint Francis de Sales

them keep that lily spotless. They looked upon it as a pearl of great price, too, and they wished to guard their treasure carefully.

"Well," answered Father John, "a good way to love the lily is to be filled with horror at the very thought of what is not chaste. A good way to stay far from the steel chains of immodesty is to remember how frightfully strong and binding those chains are. So listen while I tell you a story; and while listening, pray to the sweet Queen of Heaven that you may never let the devil bind you in the awful chains of the vice of impurity.

"It happened in Spain in the days of St. Francis Borgia. A Spanish nobleman who was addicted to that awful sin once became very, very sick with a loathsome disease. He was dying; but despite all the entreaties of his friends he would not confess his sins. Well, St. Francis heard of the case and went to see the man. But before he went he cast himself at the foot of a crucifix and prayed for help from above. 'Go,' said an interior voice, 'go to the sick man and exhort him to penance; I promise you that My grace will not be wanting to him, so that he can repent if he will.' The Saint went. But, 'Never will I confess!' snarled the sinner. Again the Saint cast himself at the foot of the crucifix and prayed. And again the voice spoke, 'Go back and take this crucifix with you. Surely, he cannot resist the sight of God dead on the cross for his redemption!' Once more the Saint went. But 'I will

never confess!' gasped the dying wretch. Then St. Francis held up the crucifix before him. And—oh wonders of the mercy of God! - it miraculously appeared torn with wounds and covered with fresh blood. But oh! The strength of the chains that bound that miserable man! His hard heart was not softened even by that sight. He glanced fiercely at the crucifix, turned to the wall, gave a gasp, and died—in his sins!"

Father John paused. The little lovers of the lily were so fright-ened! "Of course, also this sin is always forgiven by God if the sinner is truly sorry and promises amendment," he said. "But the farther one gets away from the lily, darlings, the harder it is to come back and to be truly sorry. So cling to it always. And don't let even the least little dust of an immodest thought rest upon it for a moment. Blow it away at once with a breath of trusting prayer!"

"Every virtue in your soul is a precious ornament which makes you dear to God and to man. But holy purity, the queen of virtues, the angelic virtue, is a jewel so precious that those who possess it become like the angels of God in Heaven, even though closed in mortal flesh." ~ Saint John Bosco

St. Catherine's Words About a Pure Soul

St. Catherine was asked by her Confessor to describe the beauty of a soul she had seen in the state of grace.

"Ah!" she replied, "the beauty and the brightness of such a soul is so great that were you to behold it you would be willing to endure all possible pains and sufferings for its sake."

We need not be surprised, therefore, when we read how the angels sometimes came down from Heaven to associate with those Saints on earth whose souls were pure and innocent. Nor can we any longer wonder when we hear that sometimes even the faces of those who love God, and especially those who frequently receive Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, shine with the happiness with which their souls are filled.

"Those whose hearts are pure are the temples of the Holy Spirit." ~ St. Lucy

A Warning

They were two brothers. Arthur was ten years old and Charles was fifteen. Arthur was pure and holy, like a snow-white lily, like a shrinking, modest violet. But Charles was given to dark, secret, shameful things. That is why he could not endure his brother so truly good. Was it not a constant reproach to him? Yes; and that is why he tried to teach the younger lad wicked things—things that were not purity, not modesty. That is why, when he found that his brother, despite all hints, advances, suggestions, remained true to God, he resolved to force him into sin.

"You three conceal yourselves in that wood over there," he said one morning to three of his companions in vice, "and I will get Arthur to come out with me. Then we'll teach him something, whether he likes it or not." "Sure!" they agreed and laughed. There was the devil in that laugh.

"Let's take a walk in the woods, Arthur," said Charles a few minutes later. "I want to show you the beautiful squirrels." What a lie it was! But the impure are liars always, because they are the children of the father of liars, the devil!

They crossed a meadow. How green it was! The sky was clear and blue; birds were singing. But as they neared the woods wherein the wicked ones were hiding, dark clouds suddenly hid the sun from sight. There was a fearful flash of lightning and a deafening roar of thunder—then a second—then a third. And Arthur, the innocent lad, stood trembling with fear and awe. Only a few feet from him lay his wicked brother's body, contorted, burnt, and torn, struck dead by terrible thunderbolts from on high. And his soul...

Yes; if we be true to God He will fight for us even with the lightning of heaven.

Word Search

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purity chastity tiger blood coat white soul resist death guard lily confess beauty wicked vice thunder

St. Odilo's Love For Holy Purity

From the time of his miraculous cure in the Church of Our Lady, when as yet he was only a child, St. Odilo's devotion to the Mother of God daily increased. He chose her as his protectress, and never omitted an occasion of procuring for her all the honour in his power; and Our Lady, on her part, never seemed tired of bestowing on him favours and heavenly blessings.

The virtue he strove to cultivate with the greatest care was that of holy purity, for he knew that this was the one that made her most agreeable to God, and the one she cherished most of all. So great was the perfection he attained in the practice of this virtue that a certain brightness shone on his countenance, which inspired those who approached him with a feeling of reverence.

When he grew up he felt in his soul a great desire of consecrating his whole life to her service. He became a monk in the Monastery of Cluny, so dear to the Mother of God, and made so much progress in virtue and learning that in the year 994, on the death of the holy Abbot, St. Mayeul, he was chosen to succeed him.

"How little purity is known in the world. How little we value it. What little care we take to preserve it; what little zeal we have in asking God for it, since we cannot have it of ourselves." ~ St. John Vianney

How a Little Rose Died

Once upon a time in the fair month of June a rosebush grew at the wayside. The rosebuds were already plump and full. Soon they would burst open—some fragrant morning, maybe. But one of them could not wait; it wanted to bloom before the rest. So what did it do but crowd on ahead of the others. And sure enough! One fine morning this little bud was spreading out its petals in the summer sun.

Everybody admired it. But alas! It had been in too great a hurry; it was not strong; it had not enough sap. So when the sun became hot the rose grew faint and withered away. Poor little blooming rose! Its head drooped so pitifully! Then, because it had pushed its way so much to the front, it was seen by worms; and they came and gnawed at its heart. Pretty soon the petals of the little rose dropped to the ground and were blown away by the wind. But after a few days the other buds broke open slowly and began to bloom in all their fresh and healthy beauty. Many days they bloomed; and they were the joy of everyone that saw them. The little rose that died might have had it just as nice, if it had not been in such a hurry to stop being a modest little bud.

* * * *

I knew another Rose. She was a rosebud in the springtime of life. But she was only one of a number of buds, plump and full of the many things learned, that graduated from school one year. Soon they were to bloom from the rosebud of maidenhood into the rich flower of womanhood. But one of them, Rose, could not wait; she wanted to bloom before the rest. So what did she do but crowd on ahead of the others. She was seen everywhere; no dance was complete unless Rose was there; and she would be gay until the wee small hours of the morning. Everybody talked about her; she was so popular. But alas! She had been in too great a hurry. She was too young and weak for such a life. Poor, popular little Rose! She began to droop and fade away. And then the ugly worms of sin came and gnawed at her heart. And pretty soon the petals of her beauty dropped to the ground and were blown away by the wind of time, never to return. And when the other buds, the other girls of her class, had grown to be fair, blooming flowers of maidenly modesty, strong in home-made virtue, poor little Rose seemed old and faded and nobody cared for her any more. She might have had it just as nice as the other girls, if she had not been in such a hurry to stop being a modest little bud.

Problem Questions

- 1. There are three saints pictured with a lily. Do you know who they are? Why do they carry a lily? Of what is the lily a symbol?
- 2. What is meant by the proverb: Birds of a feather flock together. Do you believe the saying always true? James goes with bad companions, but he says the boys can't harm him; in fact, he is doing his best to make them better. Do you think he will succeed? What comparison could you make to prove your point to James?
- 3. You and your little sister are out in the country for a walk. Your sister is very thirsty and wants to take a drink from the river. Would you allow her to do that? Why not? Would that be worse than to take her to a show that is not good? Or to hear a wicked story, or read a bad book? What difference is there? Do you know of a Scripture text that would apply here?
- 4. Ben takes you to his home for the first time and shows you his room. The walls are filled with indecent pictures. Could you judge from them what kind of companion Ben is? Would the pictures be a sure sign that he is bad or could there be another reason for his having them? What should you do in either case?
- 5. Ann and her sister go to a party. They soon learn that the people at the party are not behaving decently. Ann wants to go home, but her sister says they would offend their friends by leaving now, and furthermore they would be laughed at. What would you do under the circumstances?
- 6. Jack was sitting by the window and reading. All of a sudden he caught himself in the act of daydreaming and realized that his thoughts had drifted to forbidden things. Had Jack committed a sin up to this time? What should he do now? He takes up his book and begins to read again, but finds that he cannot get rid of his evil thoughts. Can you suggest other remedies?
- 7. Frank is a lazy boy who spends most of his time in idle dreaming or lying around doing nothing. Joseph, his brother, is always occupied with

something. He is always reading, or working, or playing. Which of the two boys has the better chance of remaining morally good? Why? Can you find a proverb that will answer this question?

- 8. Grace's older sister wants her to go along to a dance. Grace knows that the place has a very bad reputation, but her sister says that they will stay in their own group and that, after all, it's up to a girl to keep her place. Do you think Grace should go?
- 9. If your parents or your pastor warned you that the water you were about to drink is poisoned, would you drink the water anyway, just because you could see nothing wrong with it? Do you think people who want to poison others through bad reading would be foolish enough to label the books "Poison"? Do they want you to see that they are bad? Then do you think it wise not to listen to the warnings of your parents or your pastor in regard to dangerous amusements, such as dances, movies, etc.?
- 10. Why did God choose Mary as His mother and St. Joseph as His foster father? Why was He particularly fond of St. John and of little children? Do you know what special favour virgins will enjoy in heaven?
- 11. Do you know of any great sinners who have become saints? The act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin has been highly recommended by priests to those who wish to free themselves from sins against the sixth commandment or to protect themselves against such sins. Say it every day with all your heart, especially when you find yourself in danger.

Answer Key

Answer for Word Search on Page 6:

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