

Praying On The Capital Sins.

An Ignatian Method of Prayer

(St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises Nos. 238 to 243)

IT CONSISTS OF REFLECTING, PRAYING AND EXAMINING ON HOW WE CONTROL THE CAPITAL SINS - NAMELY, OUR SEVEN BASIC HUMAN DRIVES OR PASSIONS

Introduction:

The main cause and source of inordinate attachments and sins is what in the old catechism were called the seven deadly sins or seven deadly passions.

St. Ignatius, anxious to help us to improve the quality of our moral life, offered us in his Spiritual Exercises a prayer method on how to master our passions and inclinations and guard ourselves against their dangers.

THE SEVEN CAPITAL OR DEADLY SINS AND THEIR SEVEN OPPOSITE VIRTUES

What is Meant by the Seven Capital or deadly Sins?

When we speak of the seven capital or deadly sins, we do not actually mean seven different sinful actions. We, rather speak of seven fundamental passions, or seven strong drives nesting in our hearts that, if not controlled, will lead us to sinful actions. Passions are essential constitutes of our human nature. A human being without passions would be defective, rather sort of a dead person, like a corpse.

In the old catechisms the seven Capital Sins or Deadly passions were given these names: **1 Pride, 2.Greed (for wealth and power) 3 Lust, 4 Anger, 5 Gluttony, (greed for food) 6 Envy, 7 Sloth**

In the new Catechism of the Catholic Church (No.1773) we read: “In the passions, as movements of the sensitive appetite, there is neither moral good nor evil. But, in so far as they engage reason and will, there is moral good or evil in them .Passions are very powerful, yet potentially dangerous forces. They empower us both, to do good and to do evil. All depends on whether we master our passions or they master us. Passions in themselves are neuter. *(Not morally good or evil)*

Were we led by our passions and use them against our reason against God's laws, and against our conscience, we would do sinful actions; namely, we would fall into the sins of: **Pride, Greed (for wealth, and power) Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth.**

Were we to use them according to reason and to conscience, we would do virtuous actions, just opposite to the seven deadly sins, namely, we would practice the virtues of: **Humility, Generosity, Chastity, Meekness, Temperance, Brotherly Love, and Diligence.**

Passions can make us great saints or great sinners. **Great sinners and great saints were greatly passionate people.** All depends on how they handled their passions.

To feel angry, greedy, lustful, proud, slothful, envious or a glutton is not a sin!!

It's just human. Even Jesus, being a normal human person, had to battle with the seven deadly passions. In the Gospel we read that Jesus felt angry, hungry, loving, tired, frightened, etc. We are also told that the Devil in the desert tempted Jesus to gluttony, pride and greed. (Mt. 4/1-11)

Jesus, however, was in control of his passions. Jesus was always their master never their slave as unfortunately, very often we are. To be controlled by one's passions is to be a sinner. To control them is to be a saint.

At confession - as most people, mistakenly, do - we need not confess that we felt - angry, jealous, greedy, lustful, lazy, proud, or a glutton – if we did not act upon those feelings. To feel like that, only shows that we are human beings tempted by the seven capital passions (*wrongly called capital or deadly sins*)

The Prayer Exercise

Introduction.

- Before you begin praying, decide the length of time you want to pray and then and later on, stick it.
- Before starting your prayer, quiet down and relax.
- Place yourself in the presence of God and remain in silence for a while.
- Call for the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer;

Ask God our Lord for Three Graces:

Grace One; To be aware of the blessings God has given you through your passions. Without them, you would be useless and inert like a block of stone.

Grace Two; To be truly sorry for the times when in the past, you surrendered to your passions and have fallen into any of the seven deadly sins.

Grace Three; That in future you may control your passions, and use them according to reason and conscience only for the service of God, for your good and the good of your neighbors:

A personal Examination:

Reflect before God how do you stand before Him, how do you fare as regard the Seven Capital sins and their opposite virtues.

- Try to discover how much are you controlled by your seven deadly passions or on the contrary, how much do you control them
- As you does your reflection please, **be both honest and fair to yourself.**
- Do not overstress your virtues or your defects.
- As a help for your reflection and examination you will find here below seven pairs of opposite words – namely, **the seven deadly sins and their contrary Virtues.**
- Take one line at a time, examine yourself, and if need be, repent ask ask for forgiveness.
- Think of what will you in future to master your passions and improve yourself.
- Ask God for assistance and strength.

The Seven Deadly Passions.

1. **Am I Proud?** (*Controlled by Pride*)
2. **Am I Covetous?** (*Controlled by Greed*)
3. **Am I Impure?** (*Controlled by Lust*)
4. **Am I an Angry person?** (*Controlled by Anger*)
5. **Am I a Glutton?** (*Controlled by Gluttony*)
6. **Am I Envious?** (*Controlled by Envy*)
7. **Am I Lazy?**(*Controlled by Sloth*)

The Seven Opposite Virtues.

- :
- or Humble** (*In control of Pride*)
 - or Generous** (*control of Greed*)
 - or Chaste** (*In control of Lust*)
 - or Meek** (*In control of Anger*)
 - or Temperate** (*In control of gluttony*)
 - or Loving** (*In control of Envy*)
 - or Diligent** (*In control of Sloth*)

Closure:

- When the time fixed for prayer is over, say The Our Farther, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be
- You may recite or sing an appropriate hymn.
- If in the time allotted to prayer you cannot cover the Seven Deadly sins or Passions, later on some other time, following the same method, carry on mediating on them, starting at the point where you stopped previously.

