

VI. GLUTTONY & ASCETICISM

As we continue climbing Mount Purgatory, we become freer of the heavy sins and begin to encounter the lighter ones. This does not make them less deadly, of course, but it does mean that these sins involve "less grave" perversions of the good. Pride, envy and anger are perverted loves that delight in harm to others. Sloth is *defective* love that fails to take an interest in the things of God. Gluttony, however, is an excess of love for created things, particularly food and drink, over the love of God. It is lighter because the glutton at least loves something. But it remains deadly because the love is not in right relationship to the love of God or the love of neighbor. We live in a culture of gluttony. Our culture makes it extremely easy to believe that "we deserve a break today," and we should continually indulge our appetites (the appetite for food being only one of the many). Our faith does not call us to reject food and drink as bad things, but only to use them within reason and with respect for the common good and the love of God and others. As we look at the sin of gluttony and its antidote, asceticism, pay attention to ways in which you may be tempted toward excessive love of food and drink. Also, consider models you may have seen of people with a balanced and moderate approach to their appetites. Ask God for the grace to acquire self-discipline so that you can have the happiness you truly desire.

QUESTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. Read Genesis 3 and Matthew 4:1-4. What is the devil trying to get Jesus to do? How does this parallel Satan's temptation of Adam and Eve? How does Jesus answer the Tempter? How can you apply the passage Jesus cites from Deuteronomy 8:3 to your life?
2. Read Matthew 11:16-19. What do Jesus' enemies accuse him of? What does this suggest about Jesus' attitude toward the goodness of food and drink? What does it suggest about the attitudes of his enemies?
3. Read Matthew 6:16-21. What is to be our attitude as we fast? How does this relate to Fr. Barron's point that gluttony is the attempt to gain happiness from sources that can't give it to us? How do fasting and prayer directly challenge this disordered desire?
4. Read Isaiah 58. How does God tell Israel to make a fast pleasing to him? What does God promise us when we fast in the spirit he desires?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you or somebody you know struggle with enslavement to excessive love of food and/or drink? Do you know people with the opposite problem: a fear of eating? How do these disordered appetites push the love of God and neighbor out of the center of our lives?
2. There's an expression: "You can never get enough of what you don't really want." Have you ever experienced using food as a way of trying to fill an inner emptiness that God is meant to fill? Did you overcome it? How?
3. Fr. Barron compares asceticism to using a Stairmaster so that you can become healthier. In the spiritual life, we are likewise called to asceticism to discipline our appetites and become spiritually healthier by opening our lives to God. Have you ever tried an ascetic practice such as fasting? What were the benefits you gained?
4. Have you ever tried making a deliberate sacrifice of something you love, not out of an attempt to "diet" but as an offering to God and for his Church? What did you do and what happened when you did?