

“Spiritual Theology” by Jordan Aumann, OP

Study Questions - Chapter Thirteen

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- Aids to Spiritual Growth –

References: CCC / Spiritual Resources

CCC 1700; 2338-2347 Every Catholic should have as a minimum the following books: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Roman Missal, 3rd Edition2. Catholic Study Bible3. Catechism4. Liturgy of the Hours	Suggested Dominican Library Starter: Books by Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P. <ol style="list-style-type: none">5. “Spiritual Theology” “Christian Spirituality in the Catholic Tradition” Books by Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange: <ol style="list-style-type: none">6. “The Three Ages of the Interior Life: Prelude of Heaven,” Vol. 1 & 2

Additional References:

<p><i>“Indwelling Presence” by George A. Maloney, S.J.</i> <i>“Make Space, Make Symbols: A Personal Journey into Prayer” by Keith Clark, Capuchin</i> <i>“Called by Name” by G. Peter van Breeman</i> <i>“Seeking Spiritual Direction” by Thomas Dubay, S.M.</i></p>
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Questions

1. What does it mean to *Practice the Presence of God*?
The practice of the presence of God consists in recalling as frequently as possible that God is present in all places, especially in the depth of the just soul, and consequently in doing all things in the sight of God. Sacred Scripture and tradition are unanimous in stressing the importance and sanctifying effect of the practice of the presence of God. "Walk in my presence and be blameless," God said to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). The one necessarily follows from the other, for if we are convinced that God sees us, we will endeavor to avoid sin and will strive to be as recollected as possible in God's presence. If properly used, this spiritual practice will keep the soul in a spirit of prayer and will lead it to intimate union with God.
2. Of these five types of presence, those which most directly affect the practice of the presence of God are the first two, namely, the presence of immensity, and the presence of indwelling. Explain the following:

- a. The *presence of immensity* flows from the divine attribute of the same name; it signifies that God is truly present to all things, and this in a threefold manner: *by essence, presence, and power*.
 - b. Presence by indwelling
God's presence *by indwelling* is a special type of presence effected through grace and the operations flowing from grace, in virtue of which God is present to the just soul as a friend and a father, enabling the soul to share in his own divine life.
 - c. sacramental presence
God's *sacramental presence* is that which Christ enjoys in the Eucharist, so that he is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine.
 - d. personal or hypostatic presence
God's *personal or hypostatic presence* is proper to Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, so that the humanity of Christ subsists in the Person of the Word.
 - e. presence by manifestation
 - f. God's *presence by manifestation* signifies that which is proper to him in heaven. So far as we are concerned, however, we shall be aware of this manifestation only when we enjoy the beatific vision
3. The practice of the presence of God has several consequences of great importance for the spiritual life. Relate each of the following to the Sacrament of Penance:
 - a. *It reminds us to avoid even the slightest deliberate fault.*
 - b. *It impels us to do all things with the greatest possible perfection.*
 - c. *It enables us to observe modesty in our deportment at all times.*
 - d. *It increases our fortitude in the struggles of the Christian life*
 4. Which religious symbols do you employ to help facilitate your practicing the Presence of God?
 5. What is meant by the term "*interior recollection?*"
Interior recollection is to live in an ever-increasing awareness of God's presence in the soul, whether by immensity or by the indwelling. The result of this method is a more profound understanding of what Jesus meant when he said: "The kingdom of God is within you." When properly used, interior recollection serves to unite the practice of the presence of God with a deep and intimate union with God. It is also, therefore, one of the necessary conditions for cultivating a deep and abiding spirit of prayer.
 6. St. Ignatius distinguishes two types of examination of conscience. What are they?

- a. Regular - taking an overall view of one's spiritual state and those things that would contribute to the improvement of one's spiritual life.
 - b. Particular – to focus particularly on some definite vice one is trying to eliminate or some virtue one is trying to cultivate. (This is what Fr. Garrigous-Lagrange refers to as one's “Predominant Fault”.)
7. What are the three steps in the *examination of conscience*?
- a. *a glance at one's state of soul,*
 - b. *contrition, and*
 - c. *resolution*
8. It is said that when St. Thomas Aquinas was asked by one of his sisters what she should do to reach sanctity, he answered her in one brief sentence. What was his response?
“Will it.”
9. What is meant by the following: “*Conformity to God's Will*”?
Conformity to the will of God consists in a loving, total, and intimate submission and harmony of our will with that of God in everything he disposes or permits in our regard. When it reaches a perfect state it is known by the name of holy abandonment to the will of God; in its less perfect state it is called simply Christian resignation
10. Reflect upon the following: “The basis of abandonment to the will of God is charity. In order to attain this total abandonment, the following theological points should be meditated upon frequently:
- a. Nothing happens that has not been foreseen by God from all eternity and willed or permitted by him.
 - b. God could not will anything that is not in conformity with the purpose for which he created all things, namely, his own external glory.
 - c. All things contribute in some way to the good of those who love God and persevere in his love (Rom. 8:28).
 - d. Abandonment to the will of - God does not excuse anyone; from fulfilling the divine will of expression by obeying the precepts and commands of God, and then submitting himself or herself as regards all things else to the divine will of good pleasure, without any anxiety.”
11. Define *holy indifference*.
- a. *The purpose of holy indifference is to give oneself completely to God and to become utterly detached from self.*
 - b. *This indifference applies only to the superior part of the soul*

c. *This indifference is not merely passive but truly active*

12. What is meant by the term, *fidelity to grace*?

Fidelity in general signifies the faith and loyalty one person has for another. Fidelity to grace means loyalty or docility in following the inspirations of the Holy Spirit in any form in which they are manifested to us

13. Explain the three things which are necessary for our response to the inspirations from the Holy Spirit:

a. *attention to the inspirations*

b. *discretion for distinguishing them from natural inclinations or movements from the devil*

c. *docility in carrying out the inspiration.*

14. Fr. Aumann notes that “*it is difficult for the laity to avoid the danger of extreme individualism in their practices of piety.. the frequent use of the sacraments, devout attendance at Mass, fidelity in the practice of daily prayer, the performance of the works of mercy -- these are basic practices that should play a dominant part in the spiritual life of the laity.*” How do these things relate to what he calls “*a plan for life*”?

The plan of life is a schedule of the occupations and practices of piety an individual should perform during the day. The advantage of some kind of plan or schedule is that it gives a constancy and regularity to one's efforts toward greater perfection.

15. How important is spiritual reading to the spiritual life of the Christian?

The attentive and assiduous reading of spiritual books is an efficacious aid to the practice of prayer and the acquisition of knowledge of spiritual doctrine.

16. The text lists “*three outstanding advantages that flow from a true and holy friendship.*” Name these three advantages.

a. *a friend can be an intimate confidant to whom one can open the heart and receive advice and counsel when confronted with problems and doubts.*

b. *a friend can be a prudent and sympathetic corrector who will frankly point out one's defects and prevent many acts of imprudence.*

c. *a friend will console in times of sorrow and will know how to select the proper words and remedies in times of trial*

17. What is *Spiritual Direction*?

Spiritual direction is the art of leading souls progressively from the beginning of the spiritual life to the height of Christian perfection

18. What are the qualities a spiritual director should possess?

A good spiritual director should be learned, prudent, and experienced

19. What are the duties of a spiritual director?

To know the soul that is directed

To give instruction

To encourage the soul

To control the spiritual life of the person directed

To direct by progressive stages

To observe secrecy

20. "The direction itself cannot be successful unless the person directed possesses certain qualities." What are they?

- a. Sincerity
- b. Obedience
- c. Perseverance
- d. Discretion

21. How does Fr. Aumann suggest going about seeking a spiritual director?

The first thing to be done is to ask God in prayer for the grace and light to proceed prudently in this important matter. Then one should investigate who among the available priests possesses the prudence, experience, and learning necessary for a good director. Under no circumstances should the choice be made because of one's natural inclinations toward a particular priest, although it should be recognized that it would be more difficult to open one's heart with confidence to a priest for whom one feels repugnance or antipathy. It is not advisable to ask the priest immediately to be the spiritual director, but one should test him for a time to see whether or not he will be able to fulfill the task of director.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

1700 The dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God (*article 1*); it is fulfilled in his vocation to divine beatitude (*article 2*). It is essential to a human being freely to direct himself to this fulfillment (*article 3*). By his deliberate actions (*article 4*), the human person does, or does not, conform to the good promised by God and attested by moral conscience (*article 5*). Human beings make their own contribution to their interior growth; they make their whole sentient and spiritual lives into means of this growth (*article 6*). With the help of grace they grow in virtue (*article 7*), avoid sin, and if they sin they entrust themselves as did the prodigal son¹ to the mercy of our Father in heaven (*article 8*). In this way they attain to the perfection of charity. (356; 1439)¹

The integrity of the person

2338 The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.¹²⁵

2339 Chastity includes an *apprenticeship in self-mastery* which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.¹²⁶ “Man’s dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end.”¹²⁷ (1767)

2340 Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the *means* for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God’s commandments, exercise of the moral virtues,

¹ Lk 15:11–32.

¹ Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed.) (424). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.

¹²⁵ Cf. Mt 5:37.

¹²⁶ Cf. Sir 1:22.

¹²⁷ GS 17.

and fidelity to prayer. “Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity.”¹²⁸ (2015)

2341 The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of *temperance*, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason. (1809)

2342 Self-mastery is a *long and exacting work*. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.¹²⁹ The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence. (409)

2343 Chastity has *laws of growth* which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. “Man ... day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth.”¹³⁰ (2223)

2344 Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a *cultural effort*, for there is “an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society.”¹³¹ Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life. (2525)

2345 Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a *grace*, a fruit of spiritual effort.¹³² The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.¹³³ (1810)

The integrality of the gift of self

2346 Charity is the *form* of all the virtues. Under its influence, chastity appears as a school of the gift of the person. Self-mastery is ordered to the gift of self. Chastity leads him who practices it to become a witness to his neighbor of God’s fidelity and loving kindness. (1827; 210)

2347 The virtue of chastity blossoms in *friendship*. It shows the disciple how to follow and imitate him who has chosen us as his friends,¹³⁴ who has given himself totally to us and allows us to participate in his divine estate. Chastity is a promise of immortality. (374)

¹²⁸ St. Augustine, *Conf.* 10, 29, 40: PL 32, 796.

¹²⁹ Cf. *Titus* 2:1–6.

¹³⁰ *FC* 34.

¹³¹ *GS* 25 § 1.

¹³² Cf. *Gal* 5:22.

¹³³ Cf. *1 Jn* 3:3.

¹³⁴ Cf. *Jn* 15:15.

Chastity is expressed notably in *friendship with one's neighbor*. Whether it develops between persons of the same or opposite sex, friendship represents a great good for all. It leads to spiritual communion.²

² Catholic Church. (2000). *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd Ed.) (562–563). Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference.