

In Pursuit of Virtue

Catholics teach that the effects of sin have a double consequence. One of which is eternal, resulting in your separation from God, and the other they deem to be temporal, which is the effect the sin has on your soul. The temporal consequences can be removed either during this life or the next, but they change the innermost dispositions of your soul.

To understand this we have to understand that the soul was created in the nature of God. God is pure Light and Goodness. These are spiritual qualities, and more often than not they go against fleshly tendencies. Where the flesh wants to look out for number one, or survival of the fittest, the spiritual quality is loyalty, regardless of the consequences to self. Where the flesh feels fear, the spirit would exercise Courage. Integrity, Patience, Justice, truth...etc, these are all qualities that the Spirit has in opposition to the flesh.

So how do we strengthen or weaken them? Consider the Virtue of Loyalty. There's all kinds of Loyalty, we owe one kind, the strongest, to a marriage partner, a lesser loyalty to a friend, still another type of loyalty to an employer, or a commanding officer in a military unit. Let's say that Virtue of loyalty is very strong in a certain individual. Now he decides to succumb to temptation and commit adultery on his wife. He might not notice it, but somewhere deep down in his spirit, he's affected his soul and wounded his capacity for loyalty in some small manner. Maybe he had to struggle with his conscience significantly before he betrayed his wife by committing adultery, but maybe, just maybe, when the temptation rises again, later on, he may have just a tad bit less struggling to do. Over time, as a cumulative series of offenses have wounded that Virtue, can we not see this weakness spilling over into other areas in his life that are supported by the same Virtue of loyalty? Can we not see him caring less and less about betraying friends, employers, country or whoever else as he becomes less and less a loyal person?

The same results occur with the offense against courage, Love, Justice, and the like. These are spiritual qualities. They aren't physical or mental qualities. But we can definitely see the very real tangible effects of a person who is of stronger spirit, and one of a more corrupted weakened spirit.

We should be a lot more careful about what we say and do, especially if we know it has such an impact on us. If we choose to carelessly disregard standing up for what's right, speaking the Truth, fulfilling vows, we may wake up one morning and decide we really don't like who and what we've become. We may reach a point where doing the shameful, disgraceful thing has become such a normal thing to do for us that we no longer even think about it. It may be so much a part of us that we think of it as merely

instinct.

Maybe it's time we started purifying ourselves, maybe it's time we began to clean up all the spirirual darkness we've allowed to sully our lights of Virtue.

Chris Hall

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