

Temperance a Key to Self-Mastery

During his general audience on Nov. 22, Pope John Paul delivered the following address.

In the course of the audiences of my pontifical ministry I have tried to carry out the "testament" of my beloved predecessor, John Paul I. As is known, he did not leave a written testament because death took him unexpectedly and suddenly, but he left some notes



which showed that he had intended, at the first Wednesday meetings, to speak of the fundamental principles of Christian life. That is, he had intended to speak of the three theological virtues (he had time to do this) and then of the four cardinal virtues (this is being done by his unworthy successor).

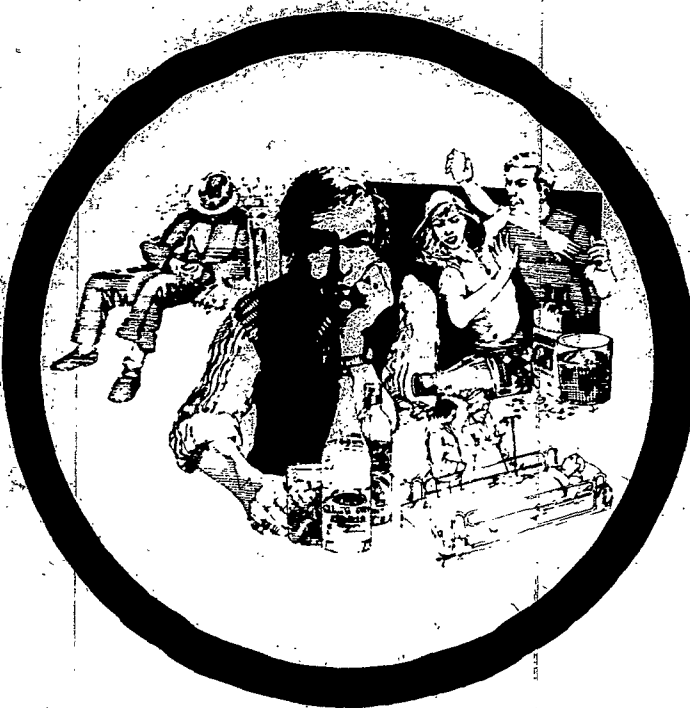
Today the turn has come to speak of the fourth cardinal virtue, "temperance," thus completing in some way John Paul I's program, in which we can see the testament, as it were, of the late pope.

When we speak of virtues — not only these cardinal ones, but all of them, every virtue — we must always have in mind the real man, the actual man. Virtue is not something abstract, detached from life, but, on the contrary, it has deep roots in life itself, it springs from the latter and forms it. Virtue has an impact on man's life, on his actions and behavior. It follows that, in all these reflections of ours, we are speaking not so much of the virtue as of man living and acting virtuously; we are speaking of the prudent, just and courageous man, and finally, precisely today, we are speaking of the "temperate" or "sober" man.

Let us add at once that all these attributes, or rather attitudes of man, coming from the single cardinal virtues, are connected with one another. So it is not possible to be a really prudent man or an authentically just one, or a truly strong one, unless one also has the virtue of temperance.

It can be said that this virtue indirectly conditions all other virtues, but it must also be said that all the other virtues are indispensable for man to be temperate.

The term temperance itself seems in a certain way to refer to what is outside of man. We say in fact that a temperate man is one who does not abuse food, drinks, pleasures, who does not drink alcohol to excess, who does not deprive himself of consciousness by the use of drugs, etc. This reference to elements external to man has its basis, however, within man. It is as if there



existed in each of us a higher self and a lower self. In our lower self, our body and everything that belongs to it is expressed: its needs, its desires, its passions of a sensual nature particularly. The virtue of temperance guarantees every man mastery of the lower self by the higher self.

Is this a humiliation of our body? Or a disability? On the contrary, this mastery gives higher value to the body. As a result of temperance, the body and our senses find the right place which pertains to them in our human condition.

A temperate man is one who is master of himself, one in whom passions do not prevail over reason will, and even the heart — A man who can control himself. If this is so, we can easily realize what a fundamental and radical value the virtue of temperance has. It is enough to look at some one who, carried away by his passions, becomes a victim of them — renouncing of his own accord the use of reason (such as, for example, an alcoholic, a drug addict) to see clearly that "to be a man" means respecting one's own dignity, and therefore letting oneself be guided by the virtue of temperance.

This virtue is also called sobriety. And rightly so! In fact, to be able to control our passions, the lust of the flesh, the explosions of sensuality (for example in relations with the other sex), we must not go beyond the rightful limit with regard to ourselves and our lower self. If we do not respect this rightful life, we will not be able to control ourselves. This does not mean

that the virtuous, sober man cannot be spontaneous, cannot enjoy, cannot weep, cannot express his feelings; that is, it does not mean that he must become insensitive, indifferent, as if he were made of ice or stone. No, not at all! It is enough to look at Jesus to be convinced of this. Christian morality has never been identified with Stoic morality. On the contrary, considering all the riches of affections and emotion with which every man is endowed (each in a different way, moreover: man in one way, woman in another owing to her own sensitivity), it must be recognized that man cannot reach this mature spontaneity unless by means of continuous work on himself and special vigilance over his whole behavior.

The virtue of temperance, of sobriety, consists, in fact, in this.

I think too that this virtue demands from each of us a specific humility with the gifts that God has put in our human nature. I would say that humility of the body and of the heart is necessary for man's interior harmony, for man's interior beauty. Let everyone think it over carefully, in particular young men and even more young women, at the age when one is so anxious to be handsome or beautiful in order to please others.

Let us remember that man must above all be beautiful inside. Without this beauty, all efforts aimed at the body alone will not make — either him or her — a really beautiful person.

Is it not just the body, moreover, that undergoes considerable and often even serious damage to health, if man lacks the virtue of temperance, of sobriety? In this connection, the statistics and files of hospitals all over the world could say a great deal. Also doctors who work on the advisory bureaus to which young married couples, fiances and young people apply, have great experience of this. It is true that we cannot judge virtue on the exclusive basis of the criterion of psychophysical health; there are many proofs, however, that the lack of the virtue of temperance, of sobriety, damages health.

I must end here, although I am convinced that this subject is interrupted rather than exhausted. Perhaps there will be an opportunity one day to return to it.

For the present this is enough.

I have tried in this way, as well as I could to follow John Paul I's testament.

I ask him to pray for me, when I shall have to pass to other topics during the Wednesday audiences.

More Opinions

Cites Mistake In Paper

Editor:

On Wednesday, Nov. 22, the article entitled "Bishops Tackle Liturgy Reform" stated, "American Catholics most likely will be permitted to receive Holy Communion more than once a day and probably also will be able to take both bread and wine at regular Sunday Masses." This is at least the second time I've noticed a major mistake concerning Transubstantiation in this paper. On July 18, 1973, the journal stated that two sisters were drinking wine during their professions. Fortunately the journal corrected its statement.

The following is a quotation from Father Connell's Confraternity Edition of the New Baltimore Catechism No. 3: "Did anything of the bread and wine remain after their substance had

been changed into Our Lord's body and blood? After the substance of the bread and wine had been changed into Our Lord's body and blood, there remained only the appearances of bread and wine."

It think that the paper should be checked for purity of doctrine before it is published.

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Concerned For Teachers

Editor:

Re: Rev. Paul J. Cuddy, Courier-Journal, Nov. 8.

It would appear that the reverend's attack on Catholic education, in general, and McQuaid, in particular, is becoming an annual event.

As a parent of five children (Canisius College, Xavier University, McQuaid, Our Lady of Mercy, St. Louis Parish School) I believe that the dedicated religious and lay people who work with our children deserve our support. These people don't just teach, they willingly share their lives with the kids and the parents.

I'm upset at the people who sit back and take "shots" without making an effort to find out what is really happening. The Rev. Cuddy has had an open invitation to visit McQuaid since his last article. We know from his current article that he has been in the neighborhood. Catholic education is not an easy task and should not be judged on a casual basis represented by isolated encounters at airports and in automobiles. And certainly not by an individual on that basis who is not only "titled" but also has the power of the press on his side.

When did non titles begin? My limited research (about 10 minutes) indicates long ago. I limited it to checking a revised edition of Baltimore No. 2 with a 1941 copyright. Part one, Lesson one, Question 6, contains 13 names in the answer. The 12 apostles (original) and St. Paul. The apostles do not have titles. Does that mean in the Baltimore tradition that they cannot be considered saints. I thought there was only one Judas. What do I do about Peter?

"Non titles" as such would appear to have been on the decline long before McQuaid existed or most of the Catholic schools still surviving in Rochester.

Come on, Father, as a parent who needs the help of our teachers in preparing our children to go off on their own with the belief that God is their Father and Jesus Christ is their Brother, I don't give a hoot about your non title question. But I genuinely

and sincerely care about the well being of their teachers and creating an atmosphere that gives encouragement to present teachers and hope to others that will strengthen their numbers.

If you don't have the time to join us, or at least observe us, in this pursuit at least give us a break and let us be.

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Evangelization Not Ordination

Editor:

In the Courier-Journal of Nov. 29, I read Pope John Paul II's "Without Love There Is no Justice." I was especially taken with the passage, "... Justice has many references and many forms. There is also

a form of justice which regards what man 'owes' God. This is a vast subject in itself."

Then the pope closed with the words, "A just man is a man of a just measure. May we all be so!"

I tried to apply these words to the question of ordination for women, which many feel is only justice. I keep hearing the words, "Tis your selflessness I seek!"

I truly believe that if the many dedicated women who seek ordination would concentrate on channeling their tremendous effort toward bringing "the sheep into one fold," this would truly be an act of love, and, "a self yielded to My Love is the emblem of My meek." And I believe "the meek shall inherit the earth."

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