

Want to learn how to serve
Mass? Come to the Log Chapel
any Wednesday at 7 p.m.

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin
November 27, 1951

Novena for Purity begins
this coming Thursday. Do
not put off confession.

BAD THOUGHTS. Part II.

Friday's Bulletin on "ambivalence" concluded by saying in effect that no moral harm can be done in the soul by evil desires which receive no consent of the will. Moreover, involuntary movements of the passions--anger, fear, shame, concupiscence--can not be wholly suppressed during our lifetime. Lower nature must be disciplined, emotions must be well-ordered, reason must become obedient to faith--otherwise we become enslaved by our animal appetites.

The Three Phases In Temptation.

Suggestion: A forbidden pleasure is desired. The imagination represents in a more or less picturesque manner the attractiveness of this pleasure, not because it is forbidden but because it is pleasurable. No matter how alluring, how dangerous, how insistent the temptation is, in itself it does not constitute sin, provided, of course, that we have not deliberately sought the evil occasion (v.g., filthy literature) from which the forbidden pleasure arises.

Pleasure: If the senses react normally some pleasure will follow the suggestion. Instinctively the sense desires are attracted toward this pleasure, a certain pleasurable reaction is experienced. The mind may be aware of this pleasure as it localizes itself in the imagination, or as it reacts in us in some way--no matter how slight--in the passions. . . But there is no sin yet, not as long as the will refuses consent. Conscience hasn't pronounced judgment, so the will hasn't stirred.

Under normal circumstances conscience will act as soon as the mind is aware of what is going on. Once this guardian, or sentry of the soul's inner fortress, is sufficiently awake to pass clear judgment, its verdict will be announced. Since the will is a blind faculty, this announcement is made to the will, which acts as our commanding officer: this pleasure is forbidden, "Reject it;" or it's permitted, "Accept it" -- says conscience. The will either follows this admonition or ignores it.

Consent: The will does not have absolute control over lower nature. For example, the will can command you not to read a lewd book; but your will, despite the protests of conscience, can order you to pick it up and read it anyhow. After this happens the will can not then stop the normal cause and effect stimulation of the imagination which comes from the lewdness. Such books are proximate occasions of sin, therefore.

The will has plenty of trouble with temptations, even outside the external, proximate occasions of sin. The will may hesitate to execute the decision of conscience, may not be quite up to withdrawing attention from forbidden pleasure to permitted pleasure, or be able to throw out the unwelcome guest. If the imagination has not been properly disciplined, if the tempted person is living a lax life, indulging in sense pleasure every chance he gets, passion becomes more difficult to control. The will, weakened by first concessions, may reject God's helping grace, accept the forbidden pleasure.

Guilty Surrender.

Consent is full and entire, when the will lets itself be led to accept willingly a pleasure which is forbidden by God's law, in spite of protesting conscience which ordered but could not execute the command to reject this evil. In such cases, if the pleasure forbidden is grievous matter--as is the case with all sex pleasure outside of matrimony, whether complete or incomplete, in thought desire and action--the sin is mortal. Mortal sin committed, God instantly leaves the soul. The black-out is deadly. If death comes suddenly without perfect contrition or confession the soul is damned for its fatal disobedience. . . . For this there is hell to pay.

-----Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God-----
(Novena: Nov. 29 -- Dec. 7)