

vain are we about being well dressed? As for the food we eat, do we seek out that which is the most elegant, most exotic, and most expensive? Are the more ordinary foods not good enough for us? Can we resist the almost insatiable urge always be buying something? What about the furnishings and “accessories” in and about our house. Would the Holy Family live as we do, if they were living in our times?

PRAYER, even the most earnest of prayer, for the virtue of Temperance remains fruitless so long as we continue to tickle our pallets with fancy foods and wines. What about our use (or abuse) of alcohol or tobacco (or even drugs)?

These are but a few of the areas we need to look into when it comes to the state of our spiritual life. Tough? Of course it is tough! The Way of the Cross of our Blessed Lord was tough! And yet He said “Come, follow Me” and, “Learn of Me.”

As Christians worthy of the name, the first condition necessary for us, therefore, is the serious endeavor to rid ourselves of the worldly habits and practices and personal character traits which are inconsistent with the life of a true Christian. In most cases our present demeanor is not the result of current circumstances, but of much past negligence. Over a long period of time, usually, we LEARNED the vices that dominate us today. We thus acquired the bad habits that we now must struggle to UNLEARN – and this is no easy task, to be sure.

The well-being of the Christian family, and, more importantly, of our souls, depends upon the practice of the Christian virtues. Those who complain that such a wholesome reconstruction of virtue is practically impossible are incorrect in their complaint. Reconstruction of virtue and the repression of vice can be achieved. The dangerous tendency of vice in us can be overcome, but this is achieved only by honest vigilance and continued repression. No doubt, at first there will be many falls and failures, but our determination must be unflinching. Our determination to overcome must be such that our tendency to evil ever so gradually is checked. This does not happen in a week or a month. It is the vigorous labor of a lifetime, and herein is SANCTITY. If we fail to become saints, we are failures. And if we fail, it will be because of our weak determination and lack of perseverance in our attack on the vice within us. No one becomes a saint simply by wishing to become one. We can become saints ONLY by having the courage and determination to suffer the necessary VIOLENCE that becoming saints demands.

The work of “putting off the old man” to “put on the new,” the work of becoming a saint, is constant, never allowing for any compromise or rest, and is the work of every Christian, if he is to make his own the benefits of Christ’s Redemption – His Passion and Death on the Cross. □