

754 When the inner watchfulness of the intellect turns its attention to the heart, a person becomes capable of knowing himself or herself better. The intellect, directed to the heart, becomes liberated from flawed intentions and thoughts. The spiritual Fathers refer to this state as the quieting (from the Greek *hesychia*) of the intellect. Internally watch persons can "see" themselves in the light of God's grace and discover what is happening within the world of their interior self. They discover the strong and weak aspects of their character, and their capabilities and talents; they begin to perceive their secret inclinations and aspirations;

C. An Ascesis which Purifies

755 Ascesis (from the Greek meaning exercise) is a Christian's constant battle with one's faults, passions, and sinful inclinations. Ascetical efforts have a therapeutic character, inasmuch as they help a person cooperate with God's grace. Grace cleanses one of sin and heals the wounds that it inflicts. Such cleansing requires that we not only renounce whatever leads to sin, but also whatever encourages it. The apostle Paul calls every Christian to undertake that kind of ascesis:

So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6:11-13).

1. Sin in Human Life

756 Having been created by God, human beings are called to grow into the freedom of the children of God (see Rom 8:21). But they have not always been faithful to this vocation. Adam and Eve, having succumbed to deception, rejected God's will and thus weakened their ability to exercise the gift of freedom. Christian tradition refers to this refusal to obey God as sin. Having sinned, humanity placed itself in an unnatural condition: separation from God and alienation from neighbours.

757 Christian tradition regards sin as an illness, which distorts one's divine image. In one of the troparia of the Parastas service, we sing, "I am not the image of your ineffable glory, though I bear the brands of transgressions. "Therefore, a sinful person does not so much deserve condemnation as require healing—God's mercy and forgiveness. Thus, a sinner

ill and Christ is the physician. "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Mt 9:12).

758 Sin is, first of all, a person's state that manifests itself in actions, and a sinful deed is the conscious and voluntary violation of God's commandment. Violation of even one of God's commandments is a violation of all of God's Law. "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable [guilty] for all of it. For he who said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law" (Jas 2:10-11). As one illness can cause another, so one sin leads to another. Saint John of Damascus emphasizes that there are eight evil "thoughts" (in Greek, *logismoi*), that give rise to sin: gluttony, lust, avarice (love of money), melancholy, anger, acedia (despondency), vainglory, and pride.⁴⁷² We call them the capital sins as they are the root of all other sinful acts.

*Keep those who are good in goodness.
In your kindness, make those who are wicked good...
bring back the wayward.
(Anaphora from the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great)*

2. The Eight Capital Sins⁴⁷³ and their Opposite Virtues

a. Gluttony and Its Opposite Virtue—Temperance

759 Human beings have a natural need for food and drink; food is necessary to support life. However, an excessive desire for food distorts a natural human need. This leads to the sin of gluttony, wherein food becomes an end in itself. There are various manifestations of this sin. The first of these is excess in food and drink. The Holy Fathers taught that food consumed in excess harms the soul. The second manifestation of gluttony is the quest for food and drink primarily for pleasure. A lack of self-control in eating and drinking leads to voraciousness in everything else, since one seeks to satiate the hunger and thirst of the soul by overindulging the body. Saint John Cassian notes: "We cannot possibly scorn the gratification of food presented to us, unless the mind is fixed on ... the delight of things celestial."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷² See JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *On the Eight Evil Spirits*, 1: PG 95, 80.

⁴⁷³ *The tradition of eight evil tempting-thoughts is generally used in the East. In the West, Saint Gregory the Great established a tradition of seven capital sins (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1866).*

⁴⁷⁴ JOHN CASSIAN, *Institutes*, 5, 14: PL 149, 229.