

Catholic Candle

☪ June 2026 ☪ catholiccandle.org ☪ catholiccandle@gmail.com

Words to Live By – From Catholic Tradition

Beware of Pride Regarding How We View Ourselves!

Esteem not thyself better than others, lest, perhaps, thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, Who knows what is in man.

My Imitation of Christ, by Thomas à Kempis, ©1982, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, 5300 Fort Hamilton Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11219, Bk.1 ch.7.



Cana Search Relaunch

CatholicCandle.org/CanaSearch ☪ CanaSearch@aol.com

In the early 1980s, some lifelong Traditional Catholics saw the need to be God's tools to help connect unmarried Traditional Catholic men and women seeking to fulfill God's call to their married vocations. These lifelong Traditional Catholics launched *Cana Search*, an initiative which continued for about twenty years and resulted in at least four Traditional Catholic marriages.

A few of this same group of lifelong Traditional Catholics now seek to relaunch *Cana Search* for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, particularly to help unmarried Traditional Catholic men and women to fulfill their married vocations.

Note: *Cana Search* is **not** "trad-ecumenical". That is, we do **not** hold that as long as a person considers himself "traditional" Catholic and attends only the Traditional Latin Mass, that he is on the correct path. As faithful and informed Catholics know, many priests and laymen are liberal or have other serious problems, even if they exclusively accept the Traditional Latin Mass.

Although *Cana Search* does not require participants to confirm more specific aspects of their adherence to Catholic Tradition, this does **not** mean those aspects are not crucial to

the spiritual life and for salvation. Rather, *Cana Search* is merely facilitating the **beginning** of the process that might end in fulfilling their married vocation.

Cana Search is merely informing unmarried Traditional Catholic men who have contacted *Cana Search*, of women who have registered themselves as unmarried Traditional Catholic women (and have sent to *Cana Search* the information and promises which are discussed below).

Likewise, *Cana Search* is merely informing unmarried Traditional Catholic women who have contacted *Cana Search*, of men who have registered themselves as unmarried Traditional Catholic men (and have sent to *Cana Search* the information and promises which are discussed below).

This is merely a **beginning** of communication that, with the help of God, with prudence and prayer, might assist those persons to “test the waters” and to discern God’s Will as to whether God is calling them to marry each other.

How *Cana Search* works:

Cana Search is open only to unmarried Traditional Catholic men and women who are eighteen years of age or older, who are looking to answer God’s call to the married vocation.

Cana Search is not selecting or seeking to match any particular Traditional Catholic man to any particular Traditional Catholic woman.

Unmarried Traditional Catholic men and women may participate by providing the information (listed below) as well as by making the specific promises required for participation, and then email that information and those promises to: CanaSearch@aol.com.

Cana Search will add the men’s names (and the information they send) to the men’s list and add the women’s names (and the information they send) to the women’s list. Then, *Cana Search* will periodically send each participant a current copy of the list of those on *Cana Search*’s list of the opposite sex.

The CanaSearch@aol.com email address is for submission of that information and those promises as well as to disseminate the lists to participants. Any other inquiries about Traditional Catholic Faith and Practice should go to CatholicCandle@gmail.com.

Information to Send:

To participate, please send the following information:

- † Full name
- † Age
- † Level and description of education
- † Occupation
- † Interests and hobbies
- † Mailing address and email address

Cana Search will treat this information as confidential, will not post this information on the internet or otherwise make this information public.

The Obligations of Those Participating

Each *Cana Search* participant must specifically promise:

- Not to disclose any part of any *Cana Search* list publicly or to any other persons other than to possibly share the list privately with a person from whom he or she is seeking personal advice.
- That he/she:
 1. Has never been divorced or received an annulment;
 2. Is Traditional Catholic and accepts the entirety of the Traditional Catholic Faith, does not attend the new mass, and attends only the Traditional Latin Mass (or would attend this Mass if it were available without compromise); and
 3. Will use the *Cana Search* information solely with the aim of fulfilling God's call to the married vocation, not for any other purpose.

Final note: whereas the *Cana Search* participant lists are confidential (as explained above), this informational flyer is public and may be shared with anyone who is interested in this work for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.



Catholic Candle note: *Catholic Candle* normally examines particular issues thoroughly, at length, using the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and the other Doctors of the Church. By contrast, our feature **CC in Brief**, usually gives an extremely short answer to a reader's question. We invite every reader to submit his own questions.

CC in Brief

The Upcoming SSPX Episcopal Consecrations

Q. Do you have any thoughts on the upcoming SSPX consecrations (any reason to hope for a real return to tradition)?

A. Regarding the upcoming SSPX consecrations, all appearances indicate that those four episcopal candidates are all SSPX “company men” who will not stand up against the SSPX liberalism – as indicated by their prior years of silence and refusal to stand up against the liberalism in the now-liberal SSPX. Those four would not have been chosen by the liberal leadership if that leadership sensed even the slightest danger that any of them would turn against the new liberal direction of the SSPX.

However, God is in charge and He can turn their hearts away from their compromises and could make them His excellent tools for great good in the future, if He chooses to use them. We will see. But pray for them that they leave their compromises and their liberalism and serve God the way He wants to be served!



Catholic Candle note: The article below is part twenty-third part of the study of the temperaments, starting with the Choleric temperament. Here are links to the first twenty-two parts:

1. Part I: Beginning our Study of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/08/27/lesson-35-about-the-temperaments-the-choleric-temperament/>
2. Part II: A general overview of the weaknesses of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/09/26/lesson-37-about-the-temperaments-continuation-of-the-choleric-temperament/>
3. Part III: A consideration of the pride of the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/10/24/lesson-38-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat/>
4. Part IV: A general discussion of anger as a passion – in order to establish a foundation for studying anger in the Choleric Temperament:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/11/26/lesson-39-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat-part-iv/>

5. Part V: Concerning the motivations for anger:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2024/12/30/lesson-40-temperaments-choleric-temperament-their-spiritual-combat-part-v/>
6. Part VI: Concerning what anger does to the body:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/01/27/lesson-41-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-vi/>
7. Part VII: Explaining when anger is sinful:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/02/21/lesson-42-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-vii/>
8. Part VIII: Explaining how being slighted provokes anger:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/03/27/lesson-42-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-viii/>
9. Part IX: Explaining how anger turns into the sin of holding a grudge:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/04/23/lesson-44-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-ix/>
10. Part X: Recommendations to help choleric to overcome pride:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/05/20/lesson-45-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-x/>
11. Part XI: Explaining how a person sins by not using his reason:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/06/28/lesson-46-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xi/>
12. Part XII: Explaining some reasons why a choleric does not use his reason properly: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/lesson-47-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xii/>
13. Part XIII: Explaining why the choleric fears to use his reason well:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/29/lesson-48-temperaments-choleric-temperament-a-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xiii/>
14. Part XIV: Explaining generally how Satan targets our fallen and weakened intellects: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/09/24/lesson-49-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-cholerics-spiritual-combat-part-xiv/>
15. Part XV: Explaining the passions in general, to lay the foundation for our consideration of the passion of fear: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/26/3050/>

16. Part XVI: Explaining fear as a passion:
<https://catholiccandle.org/2025/11/25/lesson-51-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xvi/>
17. Part XVII: Explaining how fear works in the soul and influences all of the temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/12/29/lesson-52-temperaments-choleric-temperament-the-choleric-spiritual-combat-part-xvii/>
18. Part XVIII: Explaining how pain and death are objects of fear for persons of any temperament: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/lesson-53-temperaments-choleric-temperament-pain-and-death-are-objects-of-fear-for-any-temperament/>
19. Part XIX: Explaining in what way sin is an object of fear for all temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/26/lesson-54-temperaments-choleric-temperament-whether-sin-is-an-object-of-fear-for-all-temperaments/>
20. Part XX: Explaining the causes of fear – applying to all temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/03/31/marys-school-of-sanctity-3/>
21. Part XXI – Explaining the Effects of Fear in All Temperaments: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/04/26/about-the-temperaments-part-xxi-explaining-the-effects-of-fear-in-all-temperaments/>
22. Part XXII – Explaining How to Order Our Loves So We Can Use the Passion of Fear Properly, and How the Devil Attempts to Prevent this Ordering: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/05/28/about-the-temperaments-part-xxii-how-to-order-our-loves-so-we-can-use-the-passion-of-fear-properly/>

Mary's School of Sanctity

Lesson #58 – About the Temperaments Part XXIII – Explanation of Sloth in Order to Analyze This Snare of Satan and to Combat Him

As we discussed in our last lesson, the devil does not want any of us to think deeply and love reasoning. No temperament is immune from his wily deceptions to lure us humans away from a life of reason. In this lesson we will study the vice of sloth and see its ramifications on our souls.

Since sloth is directly opposed to charity, one can see how the devil can win many souls for hell by simply enticing souls to embrace this vice. Beginning in the Garden of Eden,

the devil has routinely attempted to lure man away from using his reason and serving God.

Throughout history Satan's traps and temptations have been largely the same. But as mankind has become more corrupt, it has become easier for Satan to distract men both from thinking about the Eternal Truths **and** reflecting that man is on earth to save his soul. Let us now consider the vice of sloth so that we can more readily see how the devil succeeds in inducing man to despise the use of his highest faculty, namely, his intellect.

What is Sloth?

First let us begin by seeing what sloth is. The *Concise Catholic Dictionary* defines sloth as follows:

Sloth is a spiritual vice which is a heavy sorrow which makes one reluctant to exercise any virtue; sorrow at the spiritual good of any virtue and is contrary to charity which should cause us to rejoice in virtue and to easily perform virtuous acts. It [*viz.*, sloth] is one of the capital sins¹ or vices because it easily leads to other sins such as despair *etc.* The contrary virtue is diligence.²

Here is how St. Thomas defines sloth:

Sloth is a kind of sadness, whereby a man becomes sluggish in spiritual exercises because they weary the body – which does not apply to the demons.³

Is Sloth a Sin?

St. Thomas considers this question very thoroughly and comes to the conclusion that sloth is indeed a sin. Here is St. Thomas's reasoning:

¹ The *Concise Catholic Dictionary* defines the Capital Sins as follows:

Capital (sins) = the so-called “deadly sins”, seven in number, called “capital” because they are the source of most other sins; called “deadly” because they easily lead to mortal sins. They need not be separate acts but can exist as habits or vices.

Concise Catholic Dictionary by Robert C. Broderick, M.A., The Bruce Publishing Company of America, ©1944, p.24.

² This definition is taken from the *Concise Catholic Dictionary* by Robert C. Broderick, M.A., The Bruce Publishing Company of America, ©1944, p.150.

³ *Summa*, Ia, Q.63, a.2, ad 2, *Whether Only the Sin of Pride and Envy Can Exist in an Angel.*

First, St. Thomas explains to us the nature of sloth. He shares with us a very striking quote from St. John Damascene, as follows:

Sloth is an oppressive **sorrow**, which so weighs upon man's mind, so that he wants to do nothing⁴

Hence, St. Thomas says that sloth implies a certain weariness of work and that some define sloth as a "sluggishness of the mind which neglects to begin good."⁵

St. Thomas explains that this sorrow is always evil. Sometimes this sorrow is evil in itself and sometimes it is evil in its effect. Elaborating, St. Thomas teaches:

1. Sorrow is evil in itself:

- a) When sorrow is about that which is apparently evil but is good in reality. For example, if one were to say that it is bad to eat food in moderation in order to stay alive (when in reality we know that this is God's will for man).

Correspondingly,

- b) When a pleasure is evil, if that pleasure pertains to what *seems* to be good, but is, in truth, evil.

(**Note:** We must keep in mind that spiritual good is a genuine good; sorrow about spiritual good is *always* evil in itself.)

2. Sorrow is evil in its effect:

- a) When sorrow is about a real evil, it is evil in its effect if the sorrow so oppresses man as to draw him away entirely from good deeds.

Therefore, since we understand sloth here to denote sorrow because of a spiritual good, sloth is evil on two counts, both in itself and in its effect. Hence, St. Thomas concludes that sloth is a sin because the will is intended to be directed to God as man's final end, and sloth draws a man's will away from his final end, hence, a man goes against his reason which is a sin.

⁴ From the *Summa* IIa IIae, Q.35, a.1, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Sin*, (bold added for emphasis).

⁵ From the *Summa* IIa IIae, Q.35, a.1, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Sin*, (bold added for emphasis).

Key Points Regarding Sloth as a Sin

- Sloth is sorrow because of the good and this makes it sinful;
- St. Thomas gives this insightful connection when he tells us:

It is a sign of humility if a man does not think too much of himself, through observing his own faults; but if a man despises the good things he has received from God, this, far from being a proof of humility, shows him to be ungrateful; and from such like contempt results sloth, because we sorrow for things that we reckon evil and worthless.⁶

- St. Thomas gives us a powerful strategy to fight sloth, “**the more we think about spiritual goods, the more pleasing they become to us, and quickly sloth dies away.**”⁷

Is Sloth a Particular Vice (or Only a General Condition)?

In his treatment of this question, St. Thomas explains that in so far as sloth shuns spiritual good as toilsome or troublesome to the body, or as a hindrance to the body’s pleasure, this would not distinguish sloth from carnal vices, whereby a man seeks bodily comfort and pleasure.

Yet he adds:

[We] must say that a certain order exists among spiritual goods, since all the spiritual goods that are in the acts of each virtue are directed to one spiritual good, which is the Divine good, about which there is a special virtue, *viz.*, charity. Hence, it is proper to each virtue to rejoice in its own spiritual good, which consists in its own act, while it belongs specially to charity to have that spiritual joy whereby one rejoices in the Divine good. In like manner, the sorrow whereby one is displeased at the spiritual good which is in each act of virtue, belongs, not to any special vice, but to every vice; but sorrow in the Divine good about which charity rejoices, belongs to a special vice, which is called **sloth**.⁸

⁶ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.1, ad 3, *Whether Sloth is a Sin*.

⁷ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.1, ad 4, *Whether Sloth is a Sin*.

⁸ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.2, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Special Vice*.

Key Point Regarding Sloth as a Particular Vice

St. Thomas's main point here is to show us that sloth is inherently against charity because it involves an aversion to making efforts to serve God. We know that we were created to know, love, and serve God, and hereby can cooperate with God in the salvation of our souls. The slothful man views these necessary efforts to be too much for him and he simply refuses to make them. It is in this way that sloth is so opposed to the virtue of charity.

Is Sloth a Mortal Sin?

St. Thomas explains that sloth is indeed a mortal sin. Here are his words:

[Mortal] sin is so called because it destroys the spiritual life which is the effect of charity, whereby God dwells in us. Wherefore, any sin which by its very nature is contrary to charity is a mortal sin by reason of its genus [that is, to the overall group to which it belongs].

And such is sloth, because the proper effect of charity is joy in God, as stated above (Q. 28, A. 1), while sloth is sorrow about spiritual good in as much as it is a Divine good. Therefore sloth is a mortal sin in respect of its genus [that is, to the overall group to which it belongs].⁹

St. Thomas explains further that one must have the full consent of one's will to make a sin a formal mortal sin. This requires the will to refuse to obey what the reason dictates and then the action is against reason and becomes a sinful and immoral action. In other words, the will rebels against what is reasonable and commits the act anyway.¹⁰

St. Thomas makes a distinction between venial sin and mortal sin. If the bodily senses are involved and the will (also called the rational appetite or desire) does not give full

⁹ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Mortal Sin* (bracketed words added for clarity).

¹⁰ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Mortal Sin*.

Here are St. Thomas's words:

But it must be observed with regard to all sins that are mortal in respect of their genus, that they are not mortal, save when they attain to their perfection. Because the consummation of sin is in the consent of reason: for we are speaking now of human sins consisting in human acts, the principle of which is the reason.

consent, then the sin is only a venial sin. This is simply the battle of the flesh against the spirit. As Our Lord said in the Gospel, “the flesh is willing but the spirit is weak.”

However, if the will (rational appetite/desire) gives in to the temptation and consents, then the sin is a mortal sin. Of course, the situation must be a grievous one in order to constitute a mortal sin. St. Thomas says here that the rational appetite/desire [the will], “consents in the dislike, horror and detestation of the Divine good, on account of the flesh utterly prevailing over the spirit. In this case it is evident that sloth is a mortal sin.”¹¹

A KeyPoint: Sloth is a Very Particular Kind of Aversion!

St. Thomas makes one more important clarification when discussing sloth in this article of the *Summa*. He says,

Sloth is not an aversion of the mind from any spiritual good, but from the Divine good, to which the mind is obliged to adhere. Wherefore, if a man is sorry because someone forces him to do acts of virtue that he is not bound to do, this is not a sin of sloth, but [rather,] when he is sorry to have to do something for God's sake.¹²

One horrific aspect to consider is that because virtue is inherently good (just as it is good likewise to work for the good of one's soul and for salvation) and, as St. Thomas said above, when one is ungrateful to God, this ingratitude fosters sloth. As a result, one ultimately cares less and less about God and the things of God and so one would tend to care less about serving Him. Consequently, one would soon fall into the danger of forming the habit of sloth in his soul. This is certainly a “recipe” for damnation!

¹¹ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, *Respondeo, Whether Sloth is a Mortal Sin*.

Here are St. Thomas's words:

Wherefore, if the sin be a mere beginning of sin in the sensuality alone, without attaining to the consent of reason, it is a venial sin on account of the imperfection of the act. Thus in the genus of adultery, the concupiscence that goes no further than the sensuality is a venial sin, whereas if it reach to the consent of reason, it is a mortal sin. So too, the movement of sloth is sometimes in the sensuality alone, by reason of the opposition of the flesh to the spirit, and then it is a venial sin; whereas sometimes it reaches to the reason, which consents in the dislike, horror and detestation of the Divine good, on account of the flesh utterly prevailing over the spirit. In this case it is evident that sloth is a mortal sin.

¹² From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, ad 2, *Whether Sloth is a Mortal Sin*.

Is Sloth a Capital Vice?

St. Thomas tells us that sloth is fittingly reckoned a capital sin. Here are his words:

A capital vice is one which easily gives rise to others as being their final cause. Now just as we do many things on account of pleasure, both in order to obtain it, and through being moved to do something under the impulse of pleasure, so again we do many things on account of sorrow, either that we may avoid it [sorrow], or through being exasperated into doing something under pressure thereof. Wherefore, since sloth is a kind of sorrow, as stated above (A. 2; I-II, Q. 85, A. 8), it is fittingly reckoned a capital sin.¹³

He tells us that as Aristotle says, “no man can be a long time in company with what is painful and unpleasant,”¹⁴ it follows that something arises from sorrow in two ways:

- 1) Man shuns whatever causes sorrow; or
- 2) Man passes to other things that give him pleasure.

Thus it is that Aristotle remarks that those who find no joy in spiritual pleasures, have recourse to pleasures of the body.¹⁵

As a logical result of these considerations, St. Thomas explains to us that Pope St. Gregory the Great identifies certain consequences of the vice of sloth. St. Gregory calls these consequences the “daughters of sloth”.

The Daughters of Sloth¹⁶

When a man avoids sorrow, he first flies from unpleasant objects and secondly, he even struggles against such things that cause sorrow.

St. Gregory recognizes that spiritual goods are the object of sorrow with the vice of sloth. These very same spiritual goods are both supposed to be the goal of man and the means

¹³ From the *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, *Respondeo*, *Whether Sloth Should Be Accounted a Capital Vice*, (bracketed word added for clarity).

¹⁴ Quote taken from Aristotle’s *Ethics*, Bk. 8, Ch. 5 #1157b15 and Ch. 6 #1158a23.

¹⁵ Aristotle mentions this in *Ethics*, Bk.10, ch.6 #1176b19.

¹⁶ This section is based on *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.35, a.3, ad. 2 & 3, *Whether Sloth Should Be Accounted a Capital Vice*.

to reach that goal.

Daughters of Sloth Having to Do with Fleeing/Avoidance

He says that the avoidance of the end results in *despair*. Avoidance of the means to the end in matters which involve deliberation and mental work, is the effect of *faint-heartedness*.

He goes on to say that avoidance in matters of common righteousness is the effect of *sluggishness about the commandments*. (St. Isidore calls this one *idleness* and *drowsiness*, for some are idle and disregard the Commandments altogether, while others are “drowsy” and fulfill them with negligence.)

Daughters of Sloth Having to Do with the Struggle Against Spiritual Goods

When the struggle against spiritual goods that cause sorrow is with men who lead others to spiritual goods, this effect is called *spite*. (St. Isidore calls this one *bitterness* and says it is the result of sorrow).

When the struggle against spiritual goods sometimes extends to the goods themselves, when a man goes so far as to detest them, this effect is properly called *malice*.

(Note that the use of the words “spite” and “malice” here are not an indication of what is generic for all vices but only in the context stated here regarding not delighting in the service and things of God.)

When a man has recourse to external objects of pleasure, this daughter of sloth is called *wandering after unlawful things*.

Here St. Isidore explains that this tendency to wander (if it reside in the mind itself which is desirous of rushing after various things without rhyme or reason) is called *uneasiness of the mind*; but if it pertains to the imaginative power, it is called *curiosity*; if it affects the speech, it is called *loquacity*; and in so far as it affects a body so that it changes places and fidgets, it is called *restlessness of the body* when a man shows the unsteadiness of mind by the inordinate movements of members of his body; while if it causes the body to move from one location to another, it is called *instability* – or *instability* may denote fickleness of purpose.

A Preview...

Now that we have discussed sloth, we are in a better position to address the tricks of Satan and how he tries to lure us into sloth. In our next lesson we will begin looking into

some of these traps (including how Satan tries to get all souls to fall into sloth and its subsequent “daughters”.) We will also discuss strategies on how to combat them.



Catholic Candle note: Below is part 9 of our exploration of the best type of education – which is a true *Catholic Liberal Education*. Do not confuse this education with many university programs called “liberal arts” but which are full of fluff, falsehood, and aimless so-called “cultural enrichment” courses and “humanities”.

A liberal education also does not refer to liberalism, nor is a true liberal education an indoctrination into that error of liberalism or *political correctness*. In fact, a true *Catholic Liberal Education* is the best antidote to the errors of liberalism.

As context for this ninth part of this article, let us recall what we saw in the earlier eight parts:

Previously, ***in part 1 of this article***,¹⁷ we examined the problems we see in modern education:

- Modern colleges do not improve the quality of their students’ minds (and their thinking ability) much or at all.
- Most “education” is merely job training, fluff courses, and/or leftist indoctrination.
- The students are trained to sound like someone in their field but they do more memorizing and little thinking.
- Grade “inflation” and degree “inflation” is rampant. Grades and academic degrees do not mean much anymore.

In part 2 of this article,¹⁸ we examined, in general, what education is. We considered the human soul and the perfection of its highest faculty (*i.e.*, power) – which is the intellect – and which is immaterial (*i.e.*, incorporeal). We saw that our intellects are perfected through knowing eternal, unchangeable truths and their causes.

¹⁷ Part 1 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/06/28/the-blessings-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education/>

¹⁸ Part 2 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-ii/>

In part 3 of this article,¹⁹ after having seen what true education is, we examined the question *who should perfect his intellect*.

In part 4 of this article,²⁰ having seen that modern universities do not provide a true education, we consider whether there is *ever* any reason for men or women to attend them.

In part 5 of this article,²¹ having seen that women and girls should pursue a True *Catholic Liberal Education* – just as men and boys should, too – we then considered what the best environment is in which women and girls should do this.

In part 6 of this article, we addressed the objection that, having seen the great value of a true *Catholic Liberal Education*, we should be afraid that the great blessing of this education would be a danger to our souls because it might foster in us the vice of pride.²²

In part 7 of this article, we considered more fully the difference between the education which is appropriate for a free man as contrasted to the education which is appropriate for a slave.²³

In part 8 of this article, we considered further how the truth perfects our minds. This shows us that we must really *know* the truth, not merely hold true opinions.²⁴

At the end of part 8 of our exploration of a genuine Catholic Liberal Education, the question arose *What Studies (Sciences) More-Specifically Belong in a Catholic Liberal Education?* Below, in part 9, we explore this issue.

¹⁹ Part 3 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/08/28/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-iii/>

²⁰ Part 4 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/09/24/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-iv/>

²¹ Part 5 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/10/26/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-v/>

²² Part 6 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/01/26/3129/>

²³ Part 7 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/26/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-vii/>

²⁴ Part 8 of this article can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/03/10/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-viii/>

What Studies Belong in a True Catholic Liberal Education?

Part 9

Having seen that a *Catholic Liberal Education* is truly education and not merely fluff, job training, or indoctrination into leftist ideology, it is time to consider more specifically: *What studies belong in a true Catholic Liberal Education?* This canon of study has long been set out and perennially followed in Western Civilization (Christendom) by those seeking to perfect their highest faculty (their mind). Below, we outline that canon of study and some of the reasons for it. These are the studies which enable us to appreciate and to love the *Life of Truth* – which is the life that we should all lead.

So, let us explore an outline of what a true education should be.

We Should Study Theology

Theology is the science of God and the things intimately connected to God. There are two types of theology because there are two ways for men to come to know God. The first way is through God revealing to us truths about Himself, and this is called *revealed theology*. These revealed truths are found in two founts: Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

The second way to know God is through *natural theology*, and in this, man uses his reason alone. This latter is the sort of theology the great (non-Catholic) minds such as Aristotle pursued although they did not have the gift of Faith. But Natural Theology is important for those who have the Catholic Faith too. Thus, St. Thomas and other Doctors of the Church delve deeply into Natural Theology and St. Paul commends it too. *Romans*, 1:20.

Let us say a few words about each of these types of theology.

Revealed Theology

As we saw earlier,²⁵ we should perfect our intellect by knowing the highest truths. Thus, we should especially know and study God and the things intimately connected to God.

We should study *revealed theology* for these two reasons:

²⁵ Read part 2 of this article which can be found here: <https://catholiccandle.org/2025/07/24/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-ii/>

1. Some of these Divine truths cannot be known except by Divine revelation, *e.g.*, the fact that God is a Trinity.
2. Revealed theology cannot err because the Catholic Faith is infallible. Revealed truths are the most certain of all knowledge because God is the Author of those truths and directly reveals those truths to us; man is not involved in deriving these truths.

So, we should study revealed theology – which is the study of what God has revealed about Himself and also what He has revealed about things which are closely related to Himself (*e.g.*, the universe, angels, man).

Natural Theology

Besides *revealed* theology, we should also study *Natural Theology*, *i.e.*, the truths concerning God (or related to God) which are knowable by the light of natural reason. For example, God's existence can be proved five ways by unaided reason. *Summa*, Ia, Q.2 a.3. Likewise, through reason, we can prove that God is wholly simple, He is infinitely powerful, and many other things about God.

Just as the happiness and perfection of the blessed in heaven is the knowing (the contemplation) of God's essence, *i.e.*, the Beatific Vision, so the knowledge which perfects our mind (our highest faculty) on earth is likewise, most of all, the knowledge of God as deeply as He can be known in this life – both by revelation and by natural reason.

We Should Study Philosophy

Metaphysics

We should study the philosophy called metaphysics because it pertains to the deepest truths we can know by reason. Metaphysics studies *Being* most broadly and so includes some natural theology. Metaphysics studies and defends the truth that the Good is convertible with Being. That is, they are the same in reality but different in our understanding. This truth explains, for example, how God is understood by us under various aspects which seem separate, such as that He is **both good and beautiful** in His very Nature even though His Nature is **entirely simple**.²⁶ This truth also explains, for

²⁶ God being entirely simple means that He is not made up of multiple parts and does not have multiple aspects in His Being.

example, why God loves even the devils insofar as pertains to God's Own work creating their natures and the good that He placed into their natures.

Metaphysics also defends the truths at the foundation of human learning. For example, metaphysics examines and defends the *Principle of Non-Contradiction*, viz., that *something cannot be and not be at the same time in the same respect*. This *Principle of Non-Contradiction* tells us, e.g., that it would be false to **both** say that a square **is not** a triangle and also that a square **is** a triangle. This principle is crucial and is the basis for knowing all truth and is the firm unshakable foundation upon which rests all of our knowledge.

Revealed theology, natural theology, and metaphysics are three parts of the educational plan for developing and perfecting our minds with a *Catholic Liberal Education*.

Ethics

Besides revealed theology, natural theology, and metaphysics, a true education should include the science of ethics, which pertains to the proper ordering of our soul and our actions in the moral life, according to reason and according to our Catholic Faith. St. Thomas explains that "The essence (or nature) of human virtue consists in this: that the movements of the soul are regulated by reason".²⁷

All of our thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions which are properly human and intentional (as contrasted to unreflecting and instinctive) are either good (and so are according to virtue), or are evil and sinful. Here is how St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Church, teaches this truth:

It belongs to the reason to direct; if an action that proceeds from deliberate reason be **not** directed to the due end, it is, by that fact alone, repugnant to reason, and has the character of evil. But if it be directed to a due end, it is in accord with reason; wherefore it has the character of good. Now it must be either directed or not directed to a due end. Consequently, every **human action that proceeds from deliberate reason, if it be considered in the individual, must be good or bad.**

If, however, it does not proceed from deliberate reason, but from some act of the imagination, as when a man ["mindlessly"] strokes his beard, or moves his hand or foot, such an action, properly speaking, is not moral or human; since [a moral or a

²⁷ Here is St. Thomas's words in Latin: "Ratio virtutis humanae consistit in hoc quod motus animi ratione reguletur". *Summa*, IIa IIae Q.30 a.3.

human action] depends on the reason. Hence it will be indifferent, as standing apart from the genus of moral actions.²⁸

A liberal education is the education that a *free* man should have.²⁹ (“Liberal” comes from the Latin word “liber”, which means free.) Ethics is included in a liberal education

²⁸ *Summa*, Ia IIae, Q.18, a.9, *Whether an individual action can be indifferent?* (emphasis added; bracketed words added for clarity).

Here is the longer quote:

[Pope St. Gregory the Great] says in a sermon (Sermon #6 on the Gospels): “An idle word is one that lacks either the usefulness of rectitude or the motive of just necessity or pious utility.” But an idle word is an evil, because “men . . . shall render an account of it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36): while if it does not lack the motive of just necessity or pious utility, it is good. Therefore, every word is either good or bad. For the same reason every other action is either good or bad. Therefore, no individual action is indifferent.

I answer that, It sometimes happens that an action is indifferent in its species, but considered in the individual it is good or evil. And the reason for this is because a moral action, as stated above (Article 3), derives its goodness not only from its object, whence it takes its species, but also from the circumstances, which are its accidents, as it were; just as something belongs to a man by reason of his individual accidents, which does not belong to him by reason of his species. And every individual action must have some circumstance that makes it good or bad, at least in respect of the intention of the end. For since it belongs to the reason to direct; if an action that proceeds from deliberate reason be not directed to the due end, it is, by that fact alone, repugnant to reason, and has the character of evil. But if it be directed to a due end, it is in accord with reason; wherefore it has the character of good. Now it must be either directed or not directed to a due end. Consequently, every human action that proceeds from deliberate reason, if it be considered in the individual, must be good or bad.

If, however, it does not proceed from deliberate reason, but from some act of the imagination, as when a man strokes his beard, or moves his hand or foot, such an action, properly speaking, is not moral or human, since this depends on the reason. Hence it will be indifferent, as standing apart from the genus of moral actions. . . .

Reply to Objection 2. . . . evil, in general, is all that is repugnant to right reason. And in this sense every individual action is either good or bad, as stated above.

Summa, Ia IIae, Q.18, a.9, *Whether an individual action can be indifferent?*

²⁹ <https://catholiccandle.org/2026/02/10/the-blessing-of-a-true-catholic-liberal-education-part-vii/>

because a free man should know how to live well and virtuously and so avoiding the slavery of sin – which is contrary to the life of a free man. As Our Lord told the Jews:

Amen, amen I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin.

St. John's Gospel, 8:34

Thus, we should study True Ethics because:

- † this is a science proper to a free man;
- † it shows us how to live well and live according to reason; and
- † it shows us how to attain our end in life – both our natural end and our supernatural end.

Just as there exists a *theology of revelation* as well as a *natural* theology, similarly there is a *Catholic ethics* as well as a *natural ethics*. In the science of natural ethics, correct reason (even without the help of the Faith) shows us that the happy life is the life of virtue and the life of truth and reason. The Catholic Ethics which is taught by our Catholic Faith shows us the same thing, but in a manner which is in some ways more elevated to include some supernatural truths of ethics, such as the value of fasting for a supernatural motive.

Because we are one single whole, *i.e.*, one person, our different faculties and parts intimately affect each other. Thus, a disorderly and sinful will prevents us from having the good habits which promote the practice of our devoting ourselves, like we should, to the life of truth. Further, when our mind is darkened, then this prevents us from living the virtuous and happy life that we should.

Thus, the perfection of our minds with the light of the truth goes together with the perfection of our wills with moral virtue. A disorderly intellect harms our will and a disorderly will harms our intellect. Here is how St. John of the Cross, Doctor of the Church, explains the grave effects of error in our mind, upon our will and memory:

When the soul is darkened in the understanding, it is benumbed also in the will, and the memory becomes dull and disordered in its due operation.

Ascent of Mount Carmel, Ch.8, §2.

Thus, we see that the correct understanding of ethics is necessary:

- ❖ to achieve our practical ends of happiness both
 - here in the present life;

- as well as, even more so, in Heaven,

but also

- ❖ to enable us to effectively study and perfect our minds in all intellectual fields because a mind which is not enlightened by the truth:
 - Is an obstacle to avoiding sin; and
 - Results in a man’s weakness of will and dullness of memory that is an obstacle to learning.

Political Philosophy

A true *Catholic Liberal Education* should include political philosophy. This study of political philosophy to which we refer does not consist in matters such as “crisis management” in “politics” when this is needed by some politician who has been caught engaged in evil conduct which could end his career.

The study of political philosophy also does not involve things like:

- how a political candidate can persuade voters to vote for him;
- how to conduct accurate political polls;
- how to effectively raise funds for a political campaign;
- how to benefit special interest groups while giving voters the impression of serving them;
- how to speak as if you agree with diverse voters who disagree with each other; or
- any other trick to succeed in the business of practical politics.

Man is by nature a political animal, as St. Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle explain.³⁰ This means that man is not only a social animal – *viz.*, one who naturally lives in a group – as bees and ants do also – but he naturally organizes collectively and works with other men, ***using his reason for this organized, joint work.***

³⁰ Aristotle’s *Politics*, §1252b and St. Thomas’ commentary on this passage.

So the science³¹ of politics to which we refer, is the science which examines how political animals (men) should organize and work together performing collective works which are rational and thus are natural to them. That political activity (which is political in this broad sense) is God's Will for man and involves such cooperation and joint work which shows that God created man to live a higher life than is lived by irrational animals. (The collective activity of irrational animals is by instinct, whereas the organized activity of men is using their own reason.)

Whereas, in the science of ethics, we study the life that each *individual* man should lead – which is life according to reason and virtue – by contrast, political science is the study of the life that men should live *collectively* – viz., the organized joint activity of rational, virtuous men united in society.

This political science investigates how virtuous men should collectively promote the Common Good, suppress evil conduct, and rectify the characters of evil men because the end/goal of collective (political) action is to make society virtuous,³² since this is the happy life.

Thus, the science of politics studies such things as:

- What law is;
- Whether the civil law is binding in conscience;
- Whether revolution is morally permissible;
- Whether “civil disobedience” is morally permissible;
- What is the end of political life for the individual man and for society collectively?
- What is the life of man in society which promotes man's good, his perfection, and his happiness both on the natural level and the supernatural level?
- What is the virtue of patriotism and how is it subordinate to the virtue of piety and how is it ordered by the virtue of justice?
- The proper operation of government according to the rule of subsidiarity;

³¹ On a future occasion, we will compare the term “science” with the term “philosophy”. But for the present, the term “science” can be understood as encompassing philosophy, theology, and any other body of knowledge whose object is eternal truth.

³² St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Kingship*, Book 1, ch.15.

- What types of government are permissible; what type of government is best; and
- How can the ruler best facilitate the formation of virtue in the citizens?

These and many other truths which are studied in the science of politics are of great value in seeing and promoting the True and the Good in society, just as the science of ethics is of great value in seeing and promoting the True and the Good in the individual.

Both of these sciences are grounded in man's *rational* nature – there is neither ethics nor politics for brute beasts. Both of these sciences aid the intellectual life by fostering the orderly conditions in which the pursuit of high truth and the achievement of great good can be accomplished.

Philosophy of Nature

Besides these sciences, what else should a free man (or woman) study? He would study the principal works of creation. Here are two reasons for this:

- 1) We already saw (above) that natural theology is part of a Catholic Liberal Education. But in the order of *natural* theology (*i.e.*, studying these highest things known according to reason) our knowledge of Divine things comes through our knowing God as the *Cause* of His effects and His works in this world. In other words, our study of nature helps us in our study of natural theology, through which we understand God as the Cause of the being and of the operation of natural beings (*i.e.*, creatures).
- 2) Further, we study the chief parts of natural science, because God made us to naturally wonder about the world around us and to seek to understand God's work of creation.

In this study of nature, we should especially study the *principles* of nature, *e.g.*, things such as:

- 1) What is time;
- 2) What is place;
- 3) What is occurring when one substance is changed into a different substance?;
- 4) Whether infinite distance is possible (in the universe);
- 5) What is life and what is the soul, as it is present in plants and animals;

- 6) How does the human soul differ from the souls of other animals – its rationality and immortality;
- 7) What is motion; and
- 8) Whether Nature acts for an end or not.

These truths are much more perfecting to our minds and important to study and to know compared to such narrow topics of nature such as “*What is a genetic code?*”. Here are three reasons for this:

- 1) The foundational truths of our world are greater in themselves than the studies of things that are less foundational;
- 2) The foundational truths are more certain and less apt to be overthrown by new theories *e.g.*, about genes; and
- 3) Those matters which are less foundational depend for their true understanding upon the knowledge of those foundations underlying them. For example, the truth of the matters studied regarding the genetic code depends on the foundational understanding of what is happening when one substance changes into another.

Mathematics – *viz.*, Geometry, Arithmetic, Music, and Astronomy

A liberal education should include the mathematical sciences. Geometry and other types of mathematics have a unique clarity because the mathematical sciences abstract from aspects of bodies which can obscure universal principles. For example, we can consider what a straight line is as a universal concept and abstracted from the fact that the lines that we see around us (*e.g.*, on the edges of a table at which I am sitting) are slightly crooked or bumpy.

Arithmetic, as a *science*, is **not** the working out of particular problems as “532347296 divided by 34”. Rather, arithmetic considers universal truths about all numbers. Questions such as these are considered: “Is it true that any number is either prime or is measured by some prime number?” and “If three numbers are in continued proportion, and the first is square, then is the third one also square?” Considering universal truths about numbers is important. God created two different types of quantities: those like lines, circles, cubes, and other figures (continuous quantities studied in geometry). But He also ordered nature in discrete quantity (studied in arithmetic). Not only does studying arithmetic (as a science) help form the mind to be logical, but doing so is necessary to come to a more complete understanding of the reality of God’s order.

In addition to this unique clarity of the mathematical sciences, there are many aspects of the world around us which are mathematically quantifiable and so the mathematical sciences are tools to further study certain properties of nature insofar as they are quantifiable. For example, we can learn more about the properties of light and sound as they bounce off of a wall, by considering what we learned about angles in the science of geometry.

Music is a science which involves mathematics applied to musical pitches. For example, various musical intervals are characterized by different ratios, such as a musical octave having the ratio of 1:2 in the length of strings and pipes of musical instruments. That is, for example, a piano string which provides a “C” note is half as long as an otherwise-similar piano string which provides the “C” note which is one octave lower. So this string ratio is 1:2.

Likewise, astronomy, which is the study of the heavens, is mathematical in nature, since it involves angles, distances, speeds, *etc.* of the heavens and the bodies in the heavens. Just as music applies mathematics to sound, astronomy does so to observations of the heavens.

Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric

Logic. Early on in this course of studies, it will help a person to refine his mind by studying logic. This will help him in many ways. For example, it enables him to more carefully and explicitly understand which arguments result in a necessary conclusion, compared to those arguments which result in a conclusion which is merely probable. Further, the science of logic will enable a person to also contrast those arguments which are valid, to fallacious arguments (that conclude falsely).

Grammar. The student should also study the science of grammar because (among other reasons):

1. Grammar is the liberal art which helps to form logical, true, and clear sentences. Since we think in words and sentences, these must be clear and grammatical in order to be cogent and to reflect nature and reality; and
2. The process of learning is a discussion with others (as well as in our own mind) and so we must master the art of grammar in order to be clear and articulate in those discussions with others as well.

Rhetoric. Lastly, the discussions we have in our own minds and with others will be more enjoyable and profitable if we have some acquaintance with the art of rhetoric so that we can express ourselves beautifully and persuasively, as well as clearly and cogently.

The Seven Liberal Arts

The study of the seven liberal arts are sometimes thought to be the same as a liberal education. That is not true. Rather the liberal arts are the proper *beginning* of a liberal education.

Above, we saw that four mathematical sciences have a role in a true Catholic Liberal Education. These are: geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. Traditionally, these four are collectively called the *quadrivium* of the liberal arts. The word “quadrivium” is a word combining the Latin prefix “Quadri” with the Latin word “viae”, which mean the “four paths”.

Above, we reflected on why we should also include logic, grammar, and rhetoric in a liberal education. These three are traditionally called the *trivium*. The word “trivium” is a word combining the Latin prefix “tri” with the Latin word “viae”, which mean the “three paths”.

These seven intellectual disciplines are the liberal arts. In modern times, the phrase “liberal arts” (as that phrase is now usually used) has come to mean something vague such as “the humanities” or “the studies of the works of man” or “general education.”

But this is *not* properly what the liberal arts were or are. In the educational tradition of Christendom and the Western World (including the ancient world), the liberal arts referred to seven introductory disciplines which are valuable in themselves but which are also exceedingly helpful for developing the student’s mind to prepare him for studying the very highest subjects – philosophy and theology.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest Doctor of the Church, sets out the wise advice of prudent educators – telling us that students should not begin their studies with the highest truths (philosophy and theology), but rather, approach them through studying the liberal arts first.

Here are his words, advising how students should approach the study of great truths:

Concerning how to acquire the treasure of knowledge, choose to enter, not immediately into the ocean [of the knowledge of philosophy and theology] but enter by little streams that flow into the ocean, for difficult things can more easily be reached by means of the easier ones.³³

³³ Quoted from *Concerning the Proper Approach for Studying (Epistola De Modo Studendi)*.

Here are the Latin words that he wrote:

These “little streams” are the seven liberal arts through which we should approach the highest truths of Faith and Reason.

Conclusions of this Article

All of the primary things studied in a true *Catholic Liberal Education* are works of God, not the works of man.

Above, we saw many important elements of a good *Catholic Liberal Education*:

- We should perfect our intellect by knowing the highest truths. Thus, we should especially study and know God and the things most intimately related to God. We should study *revealed theology, natural theology, and metaphysics*.
- Besides these highest studies, we saw that we should study the science of *ethics*, which pertains to the proper ordering of our soul and of our actions in the moral life – according to reason and according to our Catholic Faith. This is important because a liberal education is the education that a free man should have so that he knows how to live well, virtuously, and happily.
- We also saw that we should study *political philosophy*, that is, the science of how men should live collectively according to reason and how they should organize and work together performing collective works which are suited to their rational nature.
- Next, we saw that we should study the *most important parts of nature* especially those which are most at the foundation of all truth about creatures, such questions as what is time, what is motion, what is a soul, what is special about the human soul, what occurs during a change of one substance to another, *etc.* These creatures, especially the higher ones, manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, Who designed them.
- Lastly, we should approach the highest truths through the study of the *seven liberal arts*.

Looking Ahead

Wonder and wisdom are often mentioned in connection with a *Catholic Liberal*

Quia quaesisti a me, in Christo mihi carissime Ioannes, qualiter te studere oporteat in thesauro scientiae acquirendo, tale a me tibi traditur consilium: ut per rivulos, non statim in mare, eligas introire, quia per faciliora ad difficiliora oportet devenire.

Education. What are wonder and wisdom and what is that connection with a true education?

To Be Continued ...



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