

## Seven Capital Virtues:

**Humility**  
**Diligence**  
**Temperance**  
Chastity  
Charity  
Patience  
Kindness

Last two weekends we  
looked at **Humility** and  
**Diligence**

This weekend we will  
look at **Temperance**



CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY CENTRE  
Encountering God • Healing Hearts • Empowering Lives

8 August 2021

# Temperance

*Proverbs 25:16*

In the Christian religion, temperance is a virtue that moderates attraction and desire for pleasure and “provides balance in the use of created goods” (CCC 1809). St. Thomas calls it a “disposition of the mind which binds the passions”. Temperance is believed to combat the sin of gluttony.

## Alertness and action

STAY AWAKE, STAY ALERT,  
**BE WATCHFUL**

Mark 13:33

The early monks understood that temptations often come in the form of thoughts. We become attracted and have fantasies, whether in petty things, bodily appetites or social interactions. The first disposition they considered to be key, was self-awareness, knowing what happens in our minds and hearts, how to recognise [bad thoughts] before we actually do a sinful action. Practicality can take on different forms, such as going in the opposite direction of the temptation or seeking help from another. For example, when we are angry with someone, thoughts of anger start emerging, and we replay in our imagination what made us angry. Then that turns into a mental video of how we are going to take revenge. This is when self-awareness comes in and we realise that the thoughts we are having are inappropriate. They drain our energy.

A first practical action would be to step away instead of going to find that person. Then to use our mind and imagination to instead remember the times when our relationship [with that person] was better or think about the future and how great it will be when this passes. We have been given the five senses of taste, touch, sight, hearing, and smell. These senses are in accord with God's good order of creation and they can involve pleasure. However, we frequently desire pleasure with our senses in excess. Therefore, there is a need for each person to **develop temperance** which helps to moderate our desires that involve the senses. God gave us the ability for such things as eating and put pleasure around it because it is necessary, but within limits. **Temperance guides us** in our enjoyment of good things in balanced moderation. The opposite of this would be addictions and over indulgences, excessive talking, eating, drinking, social media, etc.

Many passions and appetites vie for expression in the human heart, and not all of them good. Anger may be a prominent and suitable example, but others include pride, envy, greed, lust, sloth and gluttony - all of the classic deadly sins. Other emotions such as fear, guilt and shame might also be included. The wise person, it seems, will rule them all. A wise person will maintain a “cool spirit,” seeking to subject the affections to reason (cf. Proverbs 17:27).

Self-control is, after all, a fruit of the Spirit’s work and activity in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). So, too, Jesus counselled His disciples saying, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Matthew 26:41).

A person who shows temperance has a strong mind [will power] and does not eat too much, drink too much, or do too much of anything. The age of hedonism is being ushered out by a new era of temperance, synonyms: moderation, restraint, self-control, self-discipline. (Collins Dictionary)

Temperance is the virtue that attempts to keep us from excess, and, as such, requires the balancing of legitimate goods against our inordinate desire for them. Our legitimate use of such goods may be different at different times; temperance is the "golden mean" that helps us determine how far we can act on our desires - especially in using excessive social media, which is so rampant today.





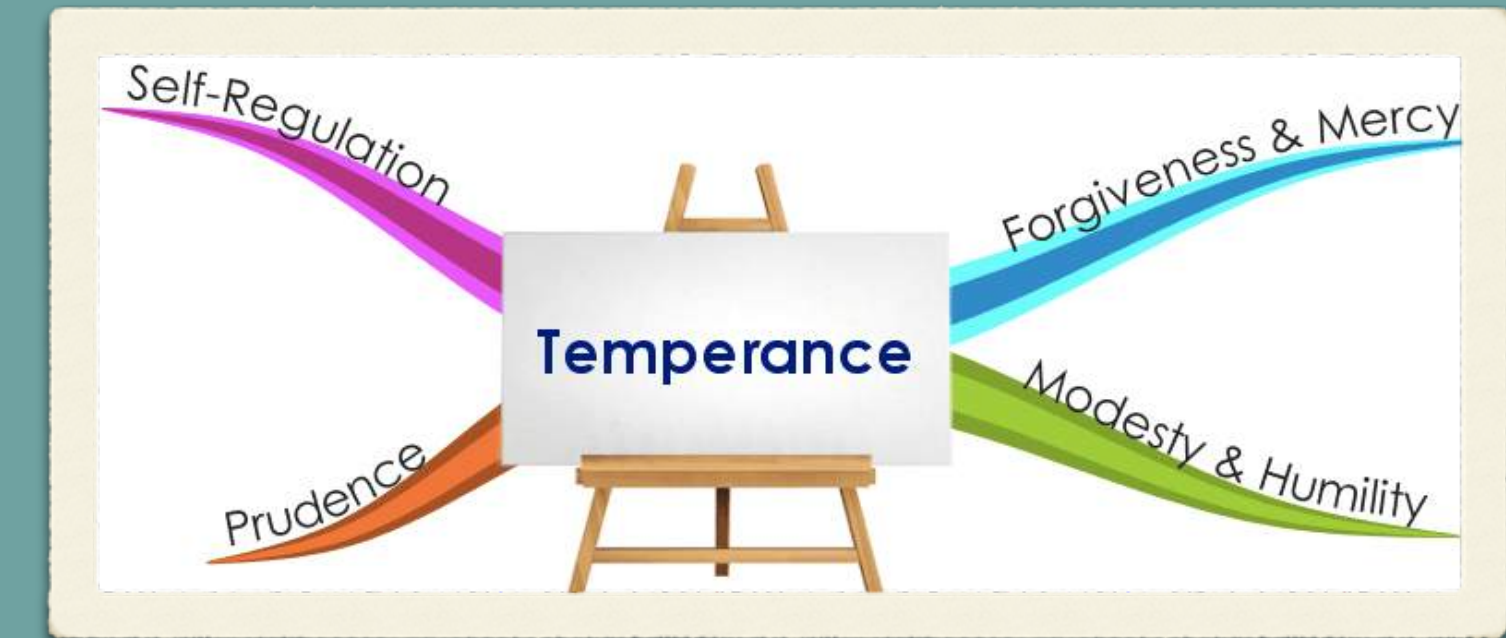
**Now man stands in the greatest need  
of the fear of God  
in order to shun those things  
which are most seductive,  
and these are the matter of temperance:  
wherefore the gift of fear corresponds to temperance  
also.  
- St. Thomas Aquinas**

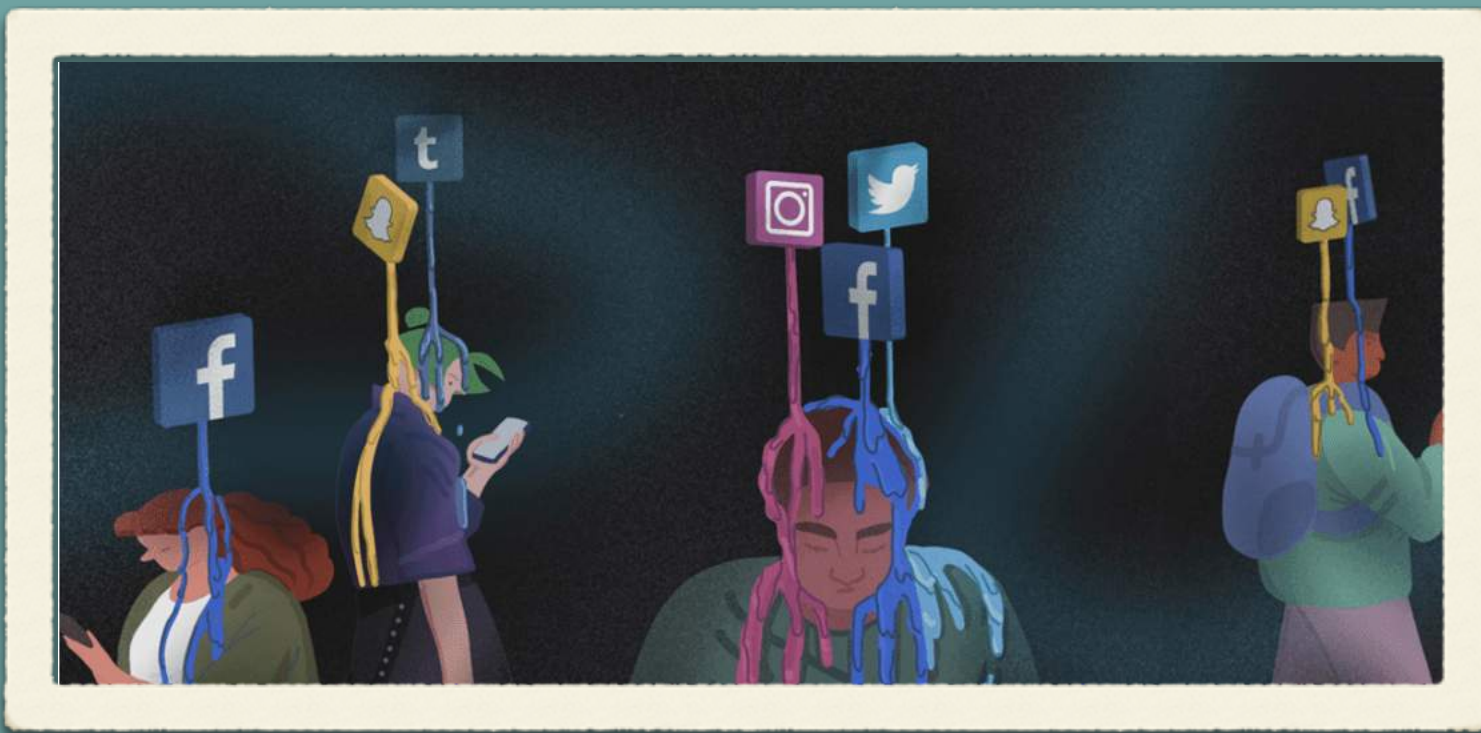
The fact that we don't do what we want but instead do what we hate is a problem as old as our first parents. Yet, we can interpret temptation either as that which is always keeping us away from God or as the very vehicle to grow closer to him. With a population of 5.83 million people and 4.92 million internet users, Singapore has one of the highest internet penetration rates (84 percent) in the world. Today, Singaporeans spend a daily average of seven hours using the Internet; about two hours on social media; two and half hours on TV; and one hour on music. We can become overly attached and even addicted to things that are essentially good and pleasurable. We need to remember the purpose behind these things so that they contribute to our legitimate goals in life. Becoming overly attached to something leads to loss of freedom and joy. The practice of moderation and self-control is essential for developing character by controlling inordinate desires within our bodies and helping us to think of others, especially the poor. The **ultimate goal of temperance** is a good life in this world, a life characterised by love, joy and peace.

The supernatural virtue of temperance enables us, through the grace of the Holy Spirit and our cooperation through the power of our will (“willpower”), to use all things in moderation and to direct even the pleasurable things in life toward our salvation and the salvation of others. This virtue sometimes leads us to forego even permissible pleasures (mortification) for the sake of the greater good that transcends this world and is found in greater union with God, bringing a joy that far surpasses any earthly good.

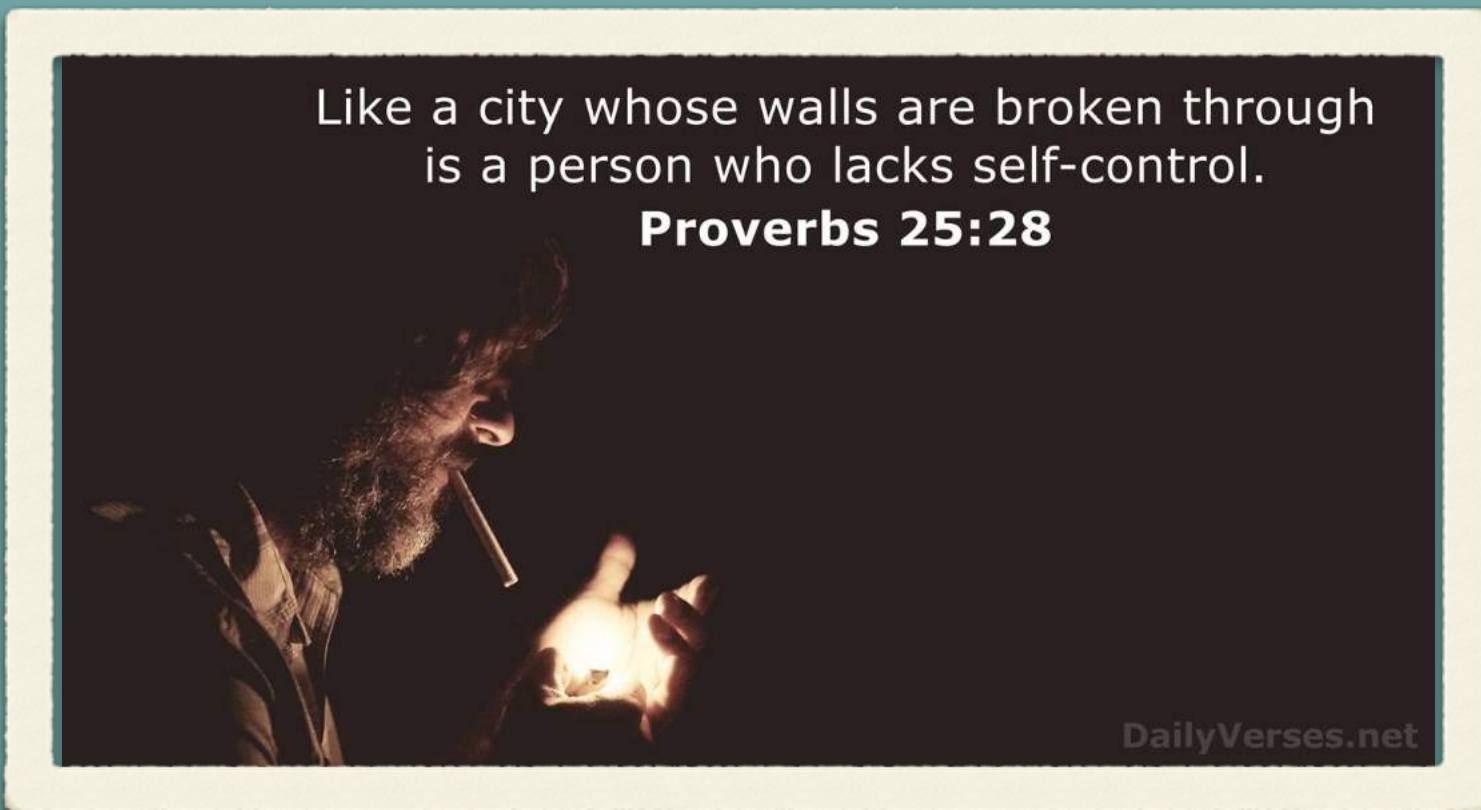
Temperance goes against the grain of the worldly mentality that pushes us toward immediate and constant self-gratification. Parents face this challenge daily, and part of their mission is to guide their children to temper their desire for too many pleasures and possessions. An easy test is to see if children are willing to give some possessions away.

For instance, when given a new toy, donate another toy to a collection for poor children. Parents will also want to be careful about how much they lavish upon their children while considering their own example of acquiring things. Children need to learn moderation in the use of time, limiting TV viewing, phone and internet use, while developing a daily routine for homework, prayer, chores and outside activities.

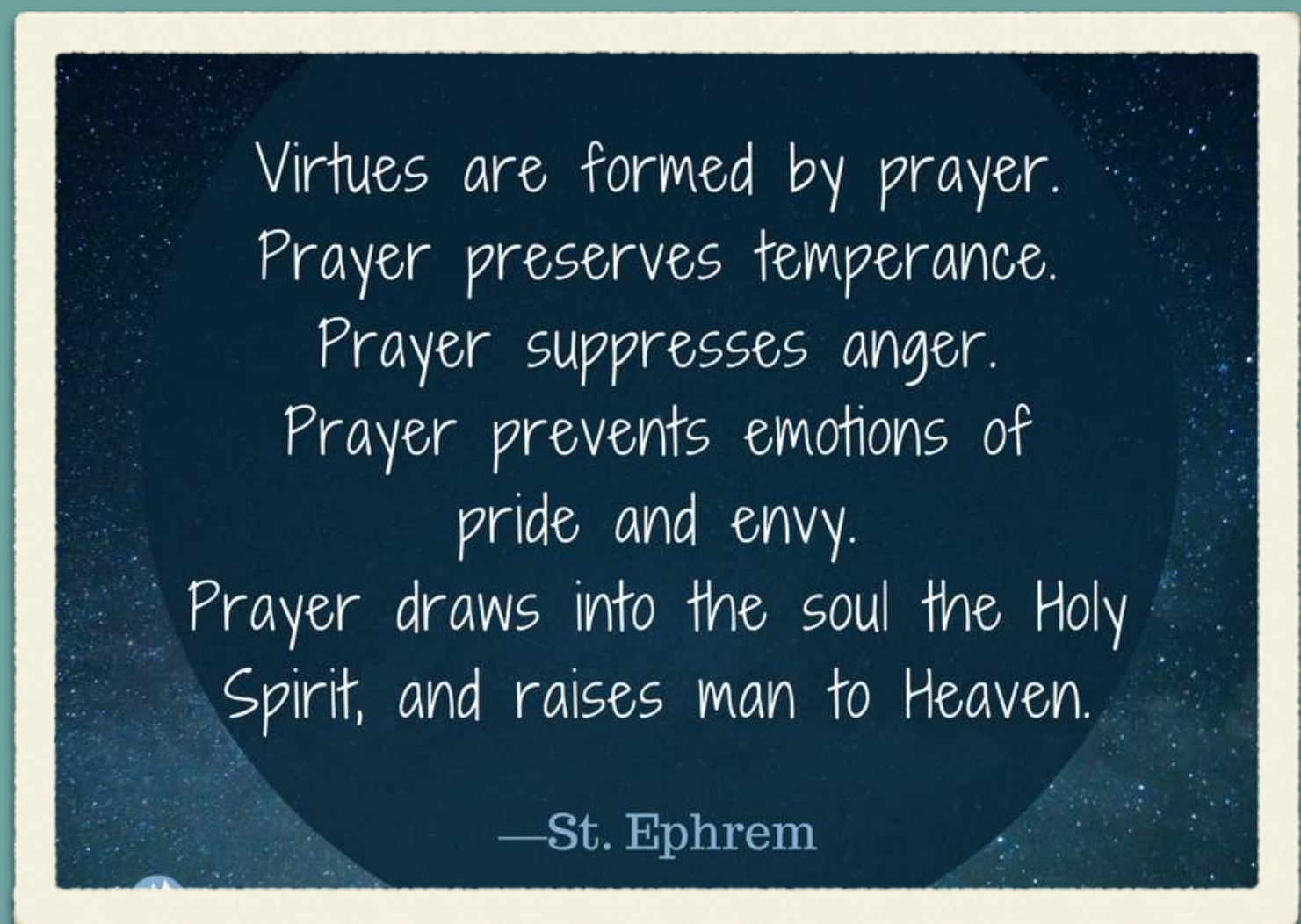




Teens need guidance in making purchases, learning to avoid impulse buying by waiting several days before purchasing an item that is not really needed. Ask teens to consider: Is it prudent for you to use your money in this manner? Do you feel peace about this purchase? Do you acquire things in order to show off, just for a change, to compensate for some inner dissatisfaction or to fill some kind of vacuum in your life? Teens need to learn moderation in appearance with clothing that is neat, modest, and appropriate.



During prayer time, we can examine our conscience each night to determine if there are areas in our life that need proper restraint to resist self-indulgence. For our spiritual wellbeing, let us grow in self-control by making more sacrifices and offering penances for the needs of family members or for those who have left the Church. These sacrifices strengthen our character so that when sufferings, setbacks, and contradictions occur, we have the spiritual courage and resilience to endure that suffering. Our task is to ask for and cooperate with God's grace in developing the virtue of temperance, and to allow Him to perfect it in us. Today many have lost the sense of penance, mortification, abstinence, sacrifice and want more and more not realising that **"less is more."**



***"Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites"***  
(Sirach 18:30).

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