

Kolbe Academy Home School

GRADE TWELVE THEOLOGY: MORALITY/CHURCH HISTORY III

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COURSE TITLE: Morality/Church History III**COURSE TEXTS:**

- BIBLE** ❖ *The Holy Bible*. Revised Standard Version: Second Catholic Edition. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006. Print. (Preferred)
- CCC** ❖ Liberia Editrice Vaticana and United States Catholic Conference. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 2011. Print.
- DESALES** ❖ De Sales, St. Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Trans. John K. Ryan. New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2003. Print.
- TRUSTFUL** ❖ De la Colombiere, St. Claude, and Fr. Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure. *Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence*. Trans. Prof. Paul Garvin. Charlotte: Tan Books, 1983. Print.
- MORALITY** ❖ Laux, Fr. John, M.A. *Catholic Morality. A Course in Religion: Book III*. Charlotte: Tan Books, 2013. Print.
- READER** ❖ Kolbe Academy Home School. *Church History III & Morality Reader*, Revised 2016. Napa: Kolbe Academy, 2016.
- MLA** ❖ Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook Eighth Edition*, 2016.
- Trustful** ❖ Kolbe Academy Home School. *Catholic Morality & Trustful Surrender Study Guide*. Napa: Kolbe Academy, 2011.
- DeSales** ❖ Kolbe Academy Home School. *Introduction to the Devout Life Study Guide*. Napa: Kolbe Academy, 2011.
- Reader SG** ❖ Kolbe Academy Home School. *Church History III & Morality Reader Study Guide*, 4 book set, Revised 2014. Napa: Kolbe Academy, 2014.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The aim of this course is to teach students how to pray, to inspire them to pursue virtue and sanctity, to trust in Divine Providence, and to make life choices based on sound moral principles. The course will explore the Church teachings regarding prayer, Divine Providence, morality, vocations, marriage, the family, the Church and, in true Kolbian style, it will end with a study of Our Blessed Mother.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- ❖ Introduce the student to a devout life in the modern world and the practice of mental prayer
- ❖ Give the student the tools to distinguish between forms of prayer that are compatible with Christianity and those that are not
- ❖ Explain why sanctity and perfection consist in doing “everything to conform to God’s will” as St. Teresa of Avila says, and why that is the highest perfection possible
- ❖ Encourage boundless trust in God, His Divine Providence, His Love, and His Mercy
- ❖ Impart a firm understanding of Christian moral principals and the proper application of Christian moral principals in life situations
- ❖ Impart a greater understanding of the dignity of the human person and free will
- ❖ Show forth the excellence of religious vocations, their benefits and responsibilities, as well as briefly define the various types of religious vocations in the Church
- ❖ Foster a deeper admiration of the particular callings within the Church
- ❖ Inspire the student to respond with greater zeal to the Universal Call to Holiness
- ❖ Reveal the beauty and sanctity of Matrimony in the Catholic Church and the benefits and responsibilities of family life

- ❖ Further the understanding of one's duties to God, the Church, self, spouse, family, state, and society
- ❖ Foster a profound appreciation and understanding of Our Lady, her role in salvation and in our lives

WEEKLY COURSE WORK:

1. **Readings**
2. Accompanying **Study Guide Questions**
3. **Weekly Paper Topics** are listed in the Course Plan. Not all of these papers need to be completed (**See Kolbe Core (K) and Kolbe Honors (H) Course Requirements on page 3**), but all should be discussed in detail as exam essays will be drawn primarily from these paper topics. These papers should be 1-2 pages typed, size 12 font, double-spaced, or neatly handwritten. See the *Weekly Paper Topics Answer Guide* for grading guidelines.
4. **Key Points & Discussion** sections highlight the key concepts that the student should know and consider. Exam questions and essays are also taken from these sections.
5. **Optional Weekly Quizzes.** These are located in the teacher's editions of the study guides.
6. **Exam Review Worksheets.** These are meant to be given to the student at the beginning of review week, so that he may use them to guide his preparation for the exams.
7. **Three-Part Exams** are given in order to assess the student's understanding of concepts and retention of material. They are meant to be closed book exams given in a two-hour period.

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS:

Summa Cum Laude students must complete the entire Kolbe Academy proposed curriculum as written. **Summa** students must fulfill the requirements for the Kolbe Core (K) or Kolbe Honors (H) course as outlined in this Theology course plan. In 9th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least one of the following courses: Theology, Literature, or History. In 10th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least two of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, or History. In 11th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in at least three of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, or History. In 12th grade, **Summa** students must pursue the (H) designation in all of the following courses: Theology, English, Literature, and History. **Magna Cum Laude** and **Standard** diploma candidates may choose to pursue the (H) or the (K) designation, but are not required to do so. If the student is not pursuing either of these designations, the parent has the option of altering the course plan as desired. **Magna Cum Laude** students must include 4 years of Theology in high school. **Standard** diploma students must include 3 years of Theology in high school.

KOLBE CORE (K) AND HONORS (H) COURSES:

- ❖ Students pursuing the **Kolbe Core (K)** designation should do all of the readings **except** those listed as HONORS or Supplemental. **Kolbe Core students need to complete at least 4 of the 14 weekly papers each semester;** they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these are major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.
- ❖ Students pursuing the **Kolbe Honors (H)** designation must do all of the readings. The readings listed as HONORS are done in addition to the rest of the assignments, not in lieu of them. Honors students are **not required** to read the supplemental readings. **Honors students need to complete 8 of the 14 weekly papers each semester;** they should have discussions or write informal essays in response to the rest of the weekly paper topics as these are major themes and will appear in some way on the final exam.

- ❖ For students who are not seeking either the Kolbe Core (K) or the Honors (H) designation for this course, parents may alter the course, as they so desire.

SEMESTER REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:

Designation*		K	H
Course Title	Morality/Church History III	Morality/Church History III	Morality/Church History III
Semester 1	Any 2 graded written work samples from Semester 1.	1. <i>Complete</i> Midterm 1 Exam 2. <i>Complete</i> Semester 1 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Midterm 1 Exam 2. <i>Complete</i> Semester 1 Exam 2. EIGHT Paper Topic Essays
Semester 2	Any 2 graded written work samples from Semester 2.	1. <i>Complete</i> Midterm 2 Exam 2. <i>Complete</i> Semester 2 Exam	1. <i>Complete</i> Midterm 2 Exam 2. <i>Complete</i> Semester 2 Exam 2. EIGHT Paper Topic Essays

*Designation refers to designation type on transcript. K designates a Kolbe Academy Core course. H designates a Kolbe Academy Honors course.

The Kolbe academic advisor will verify that the required work was completed successfully and award either the Kolbe Core (K) or the Honors (H) designation. The Kolbe academic advisor has the final decision in awarding the designation for the course. **If no designation on the transcript is desired, parents may alter the lesson plan in any way they choose and any written sample work is acceptable to receive credit for the course each semester.** If you have any questions regarding what is required for the (K) or (H) designations or diploma type status, please contact the academic advisory department at 707-255-6499 ext. 5 or by email at advisors@kolbe.org.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE:

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is used throughout the course.

FIRST SEMESTER:**Prayer and the Devout Life**

- I. De Sales, St. Francis. *Introduction to the Devout Life*. Trans. John K. Ryan. New York: Image Books, 2003. Print. (T2208)

Divine Providence

- II. De la Colombiere, St. Claude, and Fr. Jean Baptiste Saint-Jure. *Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence*. Trans. Prof. Paul Garvin. Charlotte: Tan Books, 1983. Print. (T2204)

Morality

- III. Laux, Fr. John, M.A. *Catholic Morality A Course in Religion: Book III*. Charlotte: Tan Books, 2013. Print. (T2205)

SECOND SEMESTER:**Topics in Morality**

- IV. Leo XIII. *Libertas*. (On the Nature of Human Liberty), June 20, 1888.
- V. Leo XIII. *Rerum Novarum* (On Capital and Labor), May 15, 1891.
- VI. Pius XI. *Casti Connubii* (Christian Marriage), Dec. 31, 1930.
- VII. Paul VI. *Humanae Vitae* (On the Regulation of Birth), July 25, 1968.

Topics in Morality (continued)

- VIII. John Paul II. *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), March 25, 1995.

The Church: The People of God & the Universal Call to Holiness

- IX. Paul VI. *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Nov. 21, 1964.

Marriage & Family

- X. John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio* (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World), Nov. 22, 1981.

Religious Vocations

- XI. John Paul II. *Vitae Consecrata* (On Consecrated Life), March 25, 1996-Excerpts.

Life in Christ in the Modern World

- XII. Paul VI. *Gaudium et Spes*. (Pastoral Council on the Church in the Modern World.), Dec. 7, 1965.

Our Lady: First on the Way

- XIII. Pius X. *Ad Diem Illum Laetissimum* (On the Immaculate Conception), Feb. 2, 1904.
 XIV. John Paul II. *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer), March 25, 1987.
 XV. Pius XII. *Munificentissimus Deus* (Defining the Dogma of the Assumption), Nov. 1, 1950.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS:**General Recommendations**

- Hardon, Fr. John A. *The Catholic Catechism*. S.J. New York: Doubleday, 1981. (T2244)
- Altier, Fr. Robert, "Christian Marriage" (Free Mp3 Audios from <http://trueteaching.net/Other/>).
- *Babbette's Feast*. Dir. & Screen Writer. Gabriel Axel. March 4, 1988. Film. Novel by Karen Blixen.

Prayer

- St. Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*
- Thomas A Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*
- Fr. Peter T. Rohrbach, *Conversation with Christ*
- Fr. Thomas Dubay, *Deep Conversion, Deep Prayer*
- St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises* * Available from Kolbe Academy.
- St. Theresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle, Life*
- St. Francis De Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*
- St. John of the Cross
 - ❑ *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*
 - ❑ *Dark Night of the Soul*
 - ❑ *The Spiritual Canticle*
 - ❑ *Living Flame of Love*

Inner Peace; Overcoming Sadness and Anxiety

- Bishop Fulton Sheen, *Peace of Soul*
- Fr. Benedict Groeschel, *Arise from Darkness*

Volition

- St. Maximilian Kolbe, *Will to Love*. Marytown Press

Faith & Reason

- G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*
- Cardinal John Henry Newman. *A Grammar of Assent*
- John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (On Faith and Reason)
- John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth)
- Josef Pieper. *Happiness and Contemplation* (Philosophy)

Divine Providence & Mercy

- Fr. Jeremias Drexel. *Hielotropium*
- Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J. *Abandonment to Divine Providence*
- Blessed Claude Colombière. *Trustful Surrender to Divine Providence*. (Unabridged)
- Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagange, O.P. *Providence*
- St. Faustina. *Divine Mercy in my Soul*

Discernment

- St. Francis De Sales. *Finding God's Will for You*

Marriage & Vocations

- John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*
- Karol Wojtyla
 - ❑ *The Jeweler's Shop* (also available as a movie)
 - ❑ *Love & Responsibility*
 - ❑ *The Acting Person*

Our Lady

- Fr. H.M. Manteau-Bonamy, O.P. *Immaculate Conception and the Holy Spirit*. Marytown Press (Study of St. Maximilian Kolbe's writings on Our Lady and the Immaculate Conception)

SUGGESTED GRADING RUBRIC:

	SUGGESTED WEIGHT
EXAM	20%
WEEKLY PAPERS	20%
STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS	40%
DISCUSSIONS & JOURNALING	20%

COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY:

- This course plan is a little different from the rest of the Kolbe Academy course plans. First, it is less formal than the other course plans, and second, it is addressed primarily to the student. It is written in this style in order to draw the attention of the student to the fact that morality and spirituality are about *choices* and *decisions*, in addition to concepts and knowledge, and that these choices and decisions are *ones that he must make for himself*. It is recommended that parents read the course plan in order to have more fruitful discussions. The notes for the parent/teacher in particular are in the box labeled **Teacher Note**.
- Study Guide questions are to be answered in a separate notebook and graded each week. Save these to study from for the final. At times you may answer some of these aloud.
- The study guide has a great many quotes from the book. They are meant to be re-read and reflected upon. Make sure that you read these both as you answer your study guide questions and as you study for the final. **The final exam will be largely based on the study guide questions and quotes (particularly those mentioned in the Key Points and Discussion sections) and on the paper topics.**
- Be sure to reference the introductory portions and the glossaries of your books. They are full of valuable information for understanding the texts.
- Family discussions on the material and lessons are a highly effective means of fostering deeper considerations of the material. Use the Key Points from the course plan, the paper topics, and study guide questions as a basis to start these discussions.

◆ ◆ ◆ FIRST SEMESTER ◆ ◆ ◆

PRAYER AND THE DEVOUT LIFE

WEEK 1		
READING	DE SALES	Translators Introduction Prefaces by St. Francis First Part, Sections 1-8
Study Guide	De Sales	Week One Questions
Paper Topic	Explain the importance of a good spiritual director for one seeking to live the devout life. What are the qualities one ought to look for in a good spiritual director? What are the characteristics of the friendship that ought to exist between the director and directee?	
Quiz	(Optional) Week One Quiz in the Teacher’s Edition of the study guide	
Overview	In this first week’s reading from <i>Introduction to the Devout Life</i> , St. Francis tells us that he undertook this project because a devout religious persuaded him that he ought to write a book on the subject of prayer and holy devotion for lay persons living in the world. We learn that the way to enter onto this path of holy devotion is through mental prayer, which is a conversation with God. St. Francis lays down some of the foundational groundwork in order to help us prepare to embark on this path of perfection.	
Teacher Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This course is designed to be self-directed by the student.• Please read along for discussion purposes.• Read the <i>COURSE PLAN METHODOLOGY</i> on the previous page.• During the first half of the semester, the student should keep a personal journal in which he records highlights, insights, and resolutions from his meditations. The student should be given participation points for keeping this journal, but the content of his recordings should be private, unless he wishes to share them.	
To the Student <p>If you are opening your course plan this morning and thinking to yourself, “Here we go, one more year and I’m free.” <i>Great!</i> You’re right; and this—your last high school course in theology—is a course for your life. In fact, your entire education thus far has been a guide to loving and living, though it may not have seemed so. This training is meant to exercise and expand your mind, strengthen your will and self-command, and provide you with valuable information to help you go into the world and live your life.</p> <p>You know that parents of young adults usually talk seriously to their children, giving them advice on how to live and be responsible for their decisions and actions as they prepare to leave home. This course is like that advice. It presents examples of the wisdom of great saints like St. Francis de Sales and examples of Divine Providence. We leave you with gifts of <i>lambas</i> and light.¹ May God bless, guide, and keep you this year as you prepare to go forward.</p> <p>Thus far, you have studied a great deal of religion and theology, gaining knowledge about God and the Faith. Now you will learn how to put it all into practice. We begin by learning how to pray. Through our studies, we know God by knowing about Him indirectly; that is, through prayer we can know God because we enter into a personal relationship with Him. Prayer is nothing more than a conversation with God. He is our best and closest friend, because He is our Creator and Savior. Being Love Itself, He can best love us. He waits in the inmost depths of our hearts, waiting for us to find Him.</p>		

¹ J.R.R.Tolkien. *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

In our journey to find God, we truly will come to know ourselves. We are created for God; and by entering into a dialogue of prayer, He allows us to see ourselves more clearly just as we come to see Him more clearly. In coming to know God, we begin to understand something of the mystery of our being, a creature created and loved by Love.

St. Francis de Sales & His *Introduction to the Devout Life*

The doctrine presented by St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622) in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, (1609), is the same as the doctrine of the great mystics and illustrious saints of the church, such as St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), and St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). But, unlike them, he wrote specifically for the lay person, not for members of the clergy or religious orders. St. Francis teaches us how to live the devout life fully in this world, but still remain detached from the world. He believed that mental prayer and sanctity are for all persons, not merely for those called to religious life. The Church too has always held this opinion and has proclaimed it with greater zeal since Vatican II (1962-1965).

Born in France in 1567, St. Francis De Sales was both a man of action and a mystic. As a young man, he studied humanities and philosophy in the Jesuit College in Paris. At the age of 19, he suffered a serious spiritual crisis, which did not destroy his faith but rather made it stronger. He went on to study law and theology at the University of Padua and was ordained a priest in 1593. At the age of 35, he was ordained a bishop. St. Francis was a great defender of the faith who worked tirelessly to bring back the lost sheep, particularly those who had succumbed to the upcoming Protestant heresies. He did this through preaching, spiritual direction, writing books and pamphlets (which he sometimes slipped under doors or dropped over towns with balloons), and other missionary activities. He wrote some prized spiritual classics, including *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, *Treatise on the Love of God*, and *The Catholic Controversies*. He died at the age of 55 on Dec. 28, 1622. He is a Doctor of the Church and has been dubbed the "Saint-Maker."

St. Francis defines holy devotion as spiritual agility and vivacity (liveliness! not quite our usual way of thinking of holy devotion). He says that the devout soul is one that has reached a level of perfection in which he not only does that which makes him good, *but also he does it carefully, frequently and promptly*². He also writes that only the one who follows all the commandments can be called devout and that he who does not follow all of them should be called neither devout nor even good.

At this point, you might examine your own soul and consider where it stands in this regard. If in examining your soul you find that it is *found wanting*³, do not fret! That is why we are reading the book. And remember, *the saint is only the sinner who never stops trying*. So long as you never abandon God, He will never abandon you.

By the way, if you are worried that love of God and holy devotion might be boring, sad, or detract from your life in some way, stop. "Do not be afraid!"⁴ A truly devout life is anything but drab and boring. Just as men who have discovered and developed a taste for fine wine come to find children's heavily-sugared packaged punches repulsive and tasteless, so too the devout man who has tasted the exquisite richness of the love of God no longer finds pleasure in the world. This is *not because the world gives no pleasure, but because it cannot compare!* A holy life and devotion can appear difficult to those unaccustomed to them, often because they do not understand true holiness. Think of Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees. Many failed to recognize that God was standing in their presence because they were waiting for a prophet that fit their mistaken ideas of holiness.

If you would enter upon this journey, you need to trust Isaiah when he says, "No ear has ever heard, no

² St. Francis De Sales. *The Introduction to the Devout Life*. Pt.I, Sec. 1

³ *Daniel 5:27*

⁴ John Paul II & St. Gabriel the Archangel

eye ever seen..." (64:3). No real adventurer sets out on a journey and turns back the first day because he has not reached the object of his quest. If you embark on this journey and remain faithful despite every setback, you will certainly delight in the richness of God's love even in this life. In the end, you will not regret any sacrifice because God fills every desire and *pays every debt*⁵. No one can make you love or follow Jesus Christ. Love and devotion are decisions. You alone have to decide, choose, and as St. Maximilian Kolbe says, *Will to Love*⁶.

→ Key Points

- What are the two means by which one can be united to God? (Preface)
- What is the essence of holy devotion? (Preface)
- In what does perfection consist? In what does it not consist? (PI, S5)

Discuss the following ideas, questions, and quotes: (See study guide)

- For whom did St. Francis write this book & why? (Not for Philothea, but for the audience) (Preface)
- What are the two names given to Divine Love and what distinguishes them? (PI, S1)
- Can true devotion detract from our vocation? (PI, S3)
- What are two common dangers at the beginning of the devout spiritual life? (PI, S4)

Notes

WEEK 2

READINGS	DE SALES	Second Part, Sections 1-21 First Part, Sections 9-13 (Meditations 1-5): one a day
Study Guide	<i>De Sales</i>	Week Two Questions
Paper Topic	<i>(Journal on Meditations)</i>	
Quiz	(Optional) Week Two Quiz in the Teacher's Edition of the study guide	
Overview	St. Francis lays out a rubric for the practice of mental prayer. The first step is to collect the mind and heart on the fact that we are in the presence of God and then to ask Him to help and inspire us in our prayer. As mental prayer is a conversation with God, this is probably the most crucial element of the prayer, in fact, it is the key element of all true forms of prayer. If we do not firmly believe that God is with us, that we are speaking to Him, and that He is speaking to us, then as St. Teresa of Avila would say, we are only deluding ourselves, thinking that we are praying. We must know with Whom and to Whom we are speaking.	
Student Note	This week's assignments cover the first five of the ten guided meditations that teach us how to practice mental prayer; they also cover the beginning of Part II, which gives specific directions on each part of a meditation. You may find it helpful to read four or five sections from Part II each day, and then make one of the meditations. There are sections for recording insights and resolutions from each of the meditations in the study guide. We recommend writing these in the journal. However you decide to complete the assignments each day, remember that prayer is a conversation with God. If you merely read or think about the meditation, you will not come to understand prayer from the inside.	

⁵ St. John of the Cross. *The Living Flame of Love*.

⁶ St. Maximilian Kolbe. *Will to Love*.

Best Practices for Beginning Prayer

In this week's readings, St. Francis explains the best practices of when, where, and how to pray. This knowledge is based on the long experience of the Church, on the example of Christ and His saints, and on the trials and errors of countless Christians. We move ahead much more securely when we learn from the counsel and tips of elder masters! Prayer is deeply personal because it is our conversation with Christ. No two people will have exactly the same relationship with God, and consequently not the same experience of prayer. However, there are many common factors, and by studying the saints and holy people we will be better able to pray.

When it comes to setting aside time to pray, St. Francis advises us that we need to give the Lord at least as much courtesy and consideration as we should show our human friends and family. We should avoid being late and missing our prayer time at all costs. If we absolutely must miss, we need to make amends. Fr. Robert Altier recommends thinking of prayer time as a date with your most Beloved. If you must be late or miss the date, call ahead, apologize, and reschedule! Then don't be late to the new date and get right back on track as soon as possible.

Angels and Saints

Remember that we have the whole heavenly host of angels and saints to intercede for us. They are our elder brothers and sisters who have great care for our well-being and salvation. Just as a good spiritual director and good friends will help us live devoutly, so too will our brothers and sisters in Christ who are already in heaven. Particularly pray to Our Lady. Christ has given her a unique place in mediating His graces. She is our Mother and cares for us. Remember too your holy angel; his vocation is to care for you! Remember an angel is a much higher being than you and has a vocation to be *your* guardian. What an amazing act of humility and love for God that the Guardian Angel accepts. If you want to grow in humility and in holiness, ask him to lead you.

↪ Key Points

- What should be the primary focus of our meditations? (PII, S1)
- What is prayer? What is mental prayer? Why does St. Francis advise us to pray this type of prayer? (PII, S1)
- What is the first, and perhaps most critical, step in beginning our mental prayer each day? Why is this critical? (PII, S2)

Discuss:

- St. Francis stresses the importance of not missing or being late for private mental prayer, even doing little things to make up for being late. Why do you think he says this? (PII, S1)
- How does one make the meditation? What are the various parts of the actual meditation? (PII, S4-5)
- What are the effects of meditation? (PII, S6)
- What must we do with the reflections we make in our meditation? Why? (PII, S6)
- "Since both prayer and your duties are in conformity with God's will, you must pass from one to the other with a devout and humble mind." (PII, S8) How can you put this into practice?
- What are the other types of little prayers and practices he recommends throughout the day?
- The importance of Mass and daily Mass in the devout life (PII, S14)
- The importance of going to confession for the spiritual life (PII, S19)
- The importance of frequent communion (PII, S20-21)
- "Since God often sends us inspirations by means of his angels, we should return our aspirations to him by the same messengers." (PII, S15)

Notes

WEEK 3

READINGS	DE SALES	First Part, Sections 14-18 (Med. 6-10): one a day First Part, Sections 19-24 Third Part, Sections 1-7
<i>Study Guide</i>	<i>De Sales</i>	Week Three Questions
<i>Paper Topic</i>	<i>(Journal on Meditations)</i>	
Quiz	(Optional) Week Three Quiz in the Teacher's Edition of the study guide	
Overview	This week's readings focus on the need to be purged from venial sins and evil inclinations, such as vainglory. They also discuss the importance of humility and the gradual growth in virtue, in order to continue growing in the spiritual life.	

How to Distinguish True Forms of Christian Prayer

As you make these meditations and read the sections on how to meditate, there are a few major points to keep in mind that distinguish Christian prayer from other types of prayer. It is very important to understand these because, unfortunately, there are many people, even among Catholics, who are not familiar with Tradition and have adopted all sorts of non-Christian forms for meditative prayer, which are not, in fact, true prayer and can even be dangerous.

If you can remember nothing else, at least remember this—all true Christian prayer is a CONVERSATION WITH GOD. Christian prayer is neither an emptying of the mind nor an abandonment of the will (the faculty). It is neither talking to oneself nor merely thinking about God or self-reflection. Christian prayer is neither a destruction of self nor an abandonment of the self to another being. Indeed, you will hear these terms or similar ones used in Christian prayer **but they have very specific meanings and should NOT be confused with the meanings that other traditions assign them.** Make sure to pay special attention to *all* of what you are reading in the works by saints and Catholic teachings; take it all together. If you take your understanding from a passage here or there, you may run into errors and equate Christian prayer with other traditions that use the same language with very different ends.

The following are KEY FACTORS that distinguish Christian prayer from other traditions.

(1) **Christian prayer is always a conversation with God.** As Cardinal Ratzinger wrote, "It is defined, properly speaking, as a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between man and God."⁷ (Sometimes, included in that dialog are the saints, angels, and Our Lady, those in communion with God. Point 2 follows from this.)

(2) **Christian prayer is always both deeply personal and communitarian.** "It expresses therefore the communion of redeemed creatures with the intimate life of the Persons of the Trinity. This communion, based on Baptism and the Eucharist, the source and summit of the life of the Church, implies an attitude of conversion, a flight from 'self' to the 'You' of God. Thus, Christian prayer is at the same time always authentically personal and communitarian. It flees from impersonal techniques or from concentrating on oneself, which can create a kind of rut, imprisoning the person praying in a spiritual privatism which is incapable of free openness to the transcendental God. . . . Christian prayer is the meeting of two freedoms, the infinite freedom of God with the finite freedom of man."

⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Perfect). "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation" St. Paul Books and Media: Boston, Oct. 15, 1989. pp. 8 - 9

Thus, the Christian, “. . . even when he prays in secret, is conscious that he always prays for the good of the Church in union with Christ, in the Holy Spirit and together with all the saints.”⁸

(3) **Jesus Christ is true God and true man, *God Incarnate*.**

(4) **Jesus Christ is *the Mediator between God and man*, Whose mediation is absolutely necessary for our salvation.** We cannot go to the Father except through the Son! “[In prayer] everything proceeds to converge on Christ, the fullness of revelation and of grace, and on the gift of the Holy Spirit.”⁹ In fact, “*From a dogmatic point of view*, it is impossible to arrive at a perfect love of God if one ignores His giving of Himself to us through the Incarnate Son, Who was crucified and rose from the dead. In Him, under the action of the Holy Spirit, we participate, through pure grace, in the interior life of God.”¹⁰

(5) **Creation is good.** Anything created by God is good; “. . . matter is created by God and as such it is not evil.”¹¹ Sin is evil. Our body and all of our faculties are essentially good, though on account of the fall they are in need of redemption and healing. Original sin injured man and creation through its effects, but it could not undo the goodness God created. As creations of God, man’s passions, desires, faculties, body and soul are not evil; they are fundamentally good, but they are in need of healing and correction due to sin (original and actual). You could compare this to a man with a cancer. The man signifies moral goodness and a cancer moral evil. The man may have cancer in his body, but the man has not thus become cancer. He is still a man. Even though his whole body may be ravished, tortured, and possessed, in a sense, by the cancer’s spreading and affecting it, he does not cease to be a man. The cancer that is in the body is like the evil that is in the will of a man. His human nature and dignity as a man cannot be reversed by the presence of the cancer, though it can lead to his death. Sin affects, but does not destroy that which God created. Inasmuch as something is created by God, it is essentially good.

That man’s nature is essentially good is an important point when we discuss the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Protestant reformers believed that, in essence, the fall completely destroyed the good that God created; man became something totally depraved. Redemption and justification for them meant that Jesus covered over our sin and its effects. Catholicism believes, rather, that Jesus heals us of our sin and ultimately even of its effects. He restores what is sick and broken and brings us back to life.

(6) **Sin is a perversion of the will.** God creates the faculty of will, but we *will*—we make the choices that determine whether our acts are morally good or morally evil. In a sense, willing is the only creation that is truly our own. That is why the Cure of Ars said our will is the only thing we can give God. Having a will is a good thing and it is the most precious thing you have to give God. Yet, your will needs to be healed and put back in union with God’s will. When in the Christian tradition, we say that we are abandoning our own will, we mean that we are abandoning *the perversions of sin* that affect, effect, and direct our will. We put our will in accord with God’s will, which is always for good. We submit our will to God, Who wills our true good and is not subject to the limitations, errors or perversions of the human intellect. It does not mean that we literally give up *the faculty* of our will; we need it! We need it in order to *Will to Love* God.

Other religious traditions, particularly some non-Christian religions (such as Buddhism) embrace a literal destruction of the will or its abandonment to another being. These practices are serious spiritual dangers. Whenever we abandon or inhibit the use of our will, we abandon the only means we have for loving God. This is, actually, also the reason why the Catholic Church warns us against the abuse of alcohol, mind altering drugs¹², and hypnotism; one under these influences has given up, knowingly or not, the proper

⁸ Ibid. pp. 13

⁹ Ibid. pp. 12

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 23

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 14

custody of his will and, in the case of hypnotism, turned it over to another.

(7) **The spiritual life requires purification from selfish attachments and attachments to that which separates us from God.** Once again Cardinal Ratzinger explains:

The seeking of God through prayer has to be preceded and accompanied by an ascetical struggle and a purification from one's own sins and errors, since Jesus has said that "only the pure of heart shall see God" (Mt. 5:8). The Gospel aims above all at a moral purification from the lack of truth and love and, on a deeper level, from all the selfish instincts, which impede man from recognizing and accepting the will of God in its purity. **The passions are not negative in themselves (as the Stoics and Neoplatonists thought), but their tendency is to selfishness. It is from this that the Christian has to free himself in order to arrive at the state of positive freedom . . .**

This is impossible without a radical self-denial, as can also be seen in St. Paul, who openly uses the word "mortification" (or sinful tendencies). Only this self-denial renders man free to carry out the will of God and to share in the freedom of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, one has to interpret correctly the teaching of those masters who recommend "emptying" the spirit of all sensible representations and of every concept, while remaining lovingly attentive to God. In this way, the person praying creates an empty space which can then be filled by the richness of God. **However, the emptiness which God requires is that of the renunciation of personal selfishness, not necessarily that of renunciation of those created things which he has given us and among which he placed us.** There is no doubt that in prayer one should concentrate entirely on God and as far as possible exclude the things of this world which bind us to our selfishness. On this topic St. Augustine is an excellent teacher: if you want to find God, he says, abandon the exterior world and re-enter into yourself. However, he continues, do not remain in yourself, but go beyond yourself because you are not God; he is deeper and greater than you. "I look for His substance in my soul and I do not find it; I have, however, meditated on the search for God and, reaching out to Him, through created things, I have sought to know the invisible perfections of God (Rom 1:20)." **"To remain in oneself": this is the real danger.** The great Doctor of the Church recommends concentrating on oneself but also transcending the self, which is not God but only a creature. God is "deeper than my inmost being and higher than my greatest height." In fact God is in us and with us. He transcends us in His mystery.¹³

→ Key Points

- How to distinguish true forms of prayer (See above)
- Sections 1-5: Discuss the Study Guide questions and quotes. (P3, S1-5)
- What is vainglory and how does it inhibit our spiritual growth? (P3, S4)
- What are the characteristics of a truly wise man? (P3, S4)

Discuss:

- Making a general confession; what it is; how and why he suggests we do it. (PI, S19)
- Why must we purify ourselves from the affection for venial sins? What is the difference between being purified of the affection for venial sins and occasionally committing venial sins? Which is more dangerous? Why? What is the comparison used to demonstrate these two states? Can we ever be completely free from occasionally falling into venial sins? (PI, S22)

¹² There are some permissible uses for mind-altering drugs (e.g. anesthesia) and hypnotism (currently) in the case of medical necessity; in general, for the use to be permissible, the need must be great, its effects temporary, and the family and/or another worthy guardian present to protect the patient from abuse.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 22 - 23

- Give some examples of evil inclinations -- not sins, imperfections. How can these work against us in the spiritual life? What are some remedies one could use against the examples you gave? (PI, S24)
- "All men should possess all the virtues, yet all are not bound to exercise them in equal measure. Each person must practice in a special manner the virtues needed by the kind of life he is called to." (P3, S1) Which virtues should we prefer to practice? (P3, S1) When attacked by some vice, what should we do to vanquish the enemy? (P3, S1)

"Yes, Philothea, the King of Glory does not reward his servants according to the office they hold but according to the love and humility with which they fulfill their offices." (P3, S2)

Notes

WEEK 4

READING	DE SALES	Third Part, Sections 8-22
Study Guide	<i>De Sales</i>	Week Four Questions
Paper Topic	<i>Explain the difference between a fond love and a true friendship. Use examples from literature or history to demonstrate and compare a fond love to a true friendship.</i>	
Quiz	(Optional) Week Four Quiz in the Teacher's Edition of the study guide	
Overview	This week's readings cover a number of important subjects for the devout life: humility, meekness, obedience, love and friendship. Make sure to discuss these. It would be good to give the last sections on friendship particular attention. Consider how your friendships will shape your life for better or for worse. Aristotle says, "The friend is another self." ¹⁴	

→ Key Points

- "Humility perfects us with regards to God and meekness with regards to Neighbor." (PIII, S8)
- "Undertake all your affairs with a calm mind and try to dispatch them in order one after the other. If you make an effort to do them all at once or without order, your spirits will be so overcharged and depressed that they will likely sink under the burden without affecting anything." (PIII, S10)
- Is all love friendship? Why or why not? (PIII, S17)
- In this section, what type of "friendships" does St. Francis classify as false? (PIII, S17)
- Why does he consider marriage a true and holy friendship although it has an element of sensual attraction and allurements? (PIII, S17)
- Of what do true friendships consist?

Discuss:

- Why is reason accompanied by passion never agreeable? (PIII, S8)
- "Believe me, Philothea; a father's gentle, loving rebuke has far greater power to correct a child than rage and passion." (PIII, S9)
- "Philothea, our possessions are not our own. God has given them to us to cultivate and he wants us to make them fruitful and profitable. Hence we perform an acceptable service by taking good care of them." (PIII, S15)
- What practice does St. Francis recommend we do frequently to practice genuine poverty? (PIII, S15)
- What is a fond love? How does it damage the soul? (PIII, S18)
- "Love everyone with a deep love based on charity, Philothea, but form friendships only with those who can share virtuous things with you." (PIII, S19)

¹⁴ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*.