

Why I Am Catholic

The call to self-control.

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. (Gal 5:23) When we receive the Holy Spirit, this is part of the fruit that God gives us to resist the works of the flesh which are obvious: "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like." (Gal 5:19-21) St. Paul further reminds us—and the Church still does today—that "those who belong to Christ [Jesus] have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal 5:24)

All we have to do is look around us to see people living according to the flesh and having no self-control or no desire to reign in and control their passions thru God's grace and strength. We see increasing promiscuity, violence, greed, and gluttony which lead to broken relationships, irresponsible parents, pain and suffering, our bad economy, a growing obesity problem, and people who live for the moment based on their feelings.

The Church has consistently criticized and challenged these attitudes and behaviors, and pointed out their costs and consequences. Some other denominations have wavered, relaxing their standards and moral teachings based on changing public opinion. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb 13:8) and so is human nature.

We are created with the same nature as we always have. What was bad for us 2,000 years ago is still bad for us. What was good for us is still good for us. We can look back and see that every great society or nation that fell into decline did so because of a progressive softening of their moral standards and foundational virtues that eventually led to a collapse.

"The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy. Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses. . ."(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2339)

"Self-mastery is a *long and exacting work*. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. . . Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the *means* for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an asceticism adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer." (2342, 2340)

Asceticism comes from the word asceticism. "**Asceticism** (from the Greek: ἄσκησις, *áskēsis*, "exercise") describes a life-style characterized by abstinence from various sorts of worldly pleasures (especially sexual activity and consumption of alcohol) often with the aim of pursuing religious and spiritual goals." (Wikipedia)

In contrast, lust, gluttony, and avarice (greed) are three of the Seven Deadly Sins. The others are pride (the root of all sin), envy, sloth (laziness), and wrath (anger).

The Seven Contrary Virtues are: Abstinence, Chastity, Diligence, Humility, Kindness, Liberality, and Patience. The Four Cardinal Virtues are: Prudence, Temperance, Courage, and Justice. And the Theological Virtues are: Faith, Hope, and, Love (which includes Charity).

Christ wishes to grow each of these in each of us. We can when we choose in freedom to accept the responsibility of freedom and to live good and holy lives with God's grace.