

The Spiritual Life — A Journey to God

The Three Ways, Stages, or Phases of the Spiritual Journey - Summary

1. The Purgative Way or Spiritual Childhood
 - A. In brief this way includes the initial phases of the spiritual life:
 1. coming to conversion
 2. turning away from sin
 3. bringing one's life into conformity with the moral law
 4. initiating a the habit of prayer and the practices of piety
 5. the transformation of thought, desire, and action
 6. maintaining a relatively stable life in the Church
 7. temptations & trials

Where Am I in the Spiritual Life?

(Jean-Baptiste Chautard, The Soul of the Apostolate)

Hardened in Sin

- Mortal Sin: Stubborn persistence in sin, either out of ignorance or because of a maliciously warped or severely underdeveloped conscience.
- Prayer: Deliberate refusal to have any recourse to God for help.
- Sacraments: Rarely attends Mass, if at all, and does not participate in confession.

Surface Christianity

- Mortal Sin: Considered as an insignificant nuisance, and easily forgiven. The soul easily gives way and commits mortal sin at every possible occasion or temptation. Confession almost without contrition.
- Prayer: Mechanical; either inattentive, or always dictated by temporal interest. Last on the list of priorities and easily abandoned by minor distractions or difficulty. These souls enter into themselves very rarely and superficially and do not set aside or protect specific time for prayer on a daily basis.
- Sacraments: Sporadically attends Mass and confession—often only at Christmas and Easter.

1. The Purgative Way

Mediocre Piety

- Mortal Sin: Weak resistance. Rarely avoids near occasions of sin but seriously regrets having sinned, and makes adequate confessions.
- Venial Sin: Complete acceptance of this sin, which is considered as insignificant. Hence, the lukewarm state of the will. Does nothing whatever to prevent venial sin, or to eradicate it, or to undercover and uproot it.
- Prayer: From time to time, prays well but in sporadic fashion. Momentary fits of fervor, but inconsistent and fleeting. Prayer is far from habitual but is valued. Prayer is either intermittently attentive vocal prayer or petition-based prayer focused on temporal needs and desires.
- Sacraments: attends Mass regularly and pursues confession more frequently.

Intermittent Piety

- Mortal Sin: Loyal resistance. Habitually avoids the near occasion of sin. Deep regrets when recognized. Does penance to make reparation.
- Venial Sin: Sometimes deliberate. Puts up a weak fight. Sorrow is only superficial. Makes a particular examination of conscience, but without any method or coherence.
- Prayer: Practices vocal prayer regularly. Not firmly resolved to remain faithful to mental prayer / meditation (time, place, topic, and material). Gives up as soon as dryness is felt, or as soon as there is business to attend to.
- Sacraments: Attends Mass weekly and pursues confession at least quarterly.

Sustained Piety

- Mortal Sin: Never. At most very rare, when taken suddenly and violently by surprise. And then, often it is to be doubted if the sin is mortal. It is followed by ardent compunction/guilt and a desire for penance.
- Venial Sin: Vigilant in avoiding and fighting it. Rarely deliberate. Intense sorrow, but does little by way of reparation. Consistent particular examen, but aiming only at avoidance of venial sin.
- Imperfections: The soul either avoids uncovering them, so as not to have to fight them, or else easily excuses them. Approves the thought of renouncing them, and would like to do so, but makes little effort in that direction.
- Prayer: Always faithful to prayer, no matter what happens. Includes vocal prayer and mental prayer which is often affective. Alternating consolations and dryness, the latter endured with considerable hardship.
- Sacraments: Always attends weekly and daily Mass if able. Pursues confession on a regular schedule.