

sense morals. A physical act will occur only if we initiate it, while an emotion or desire may come on its own, but its origin is from us. Emotions are the primary driving force in many people, but the goal of Christian spiritual advancement is to attune our will to the perfect moral principles of Christ, rather than emotions. The ultimate goal of our spiritual advancement is not only conformance to God's moral principles, but to become the person of Christ, who is our beginning and our end, (Rev 22:13).

In the *active night of the spirit*, the student takes the initiative in the proper formation of the moral will, and of faith. Our advancement here is spiritual; faith, love, patience, joy, imagination. These have little or no sensory component, but they are real acts with real effects, and there is a right way, a wrong way, and God's way to do each.

To this point, self (self is separation from God), has been presented disguised and as our own particular failings. In the advanced stages, the saints report unexpected feelings of abandonment, and dissatisfaction against God, (St. Faustina's diary, entry 77).

Sin is now presented to the student in its core form—rebellion against God. This undisguised rebellion may be presented alongside incomplete work from the previous stages, and our guide (in part) is our own imperfect soul, which we are trying to correct. Doing this cold turkey in a convent is easiest, but most people must take the home study curriculum.

We must forge ourselves into Christ, and we do it on the cross. In the depths of the night of the spirit, the student feels abandoned, rejected, useless, sinful, purposeless, stupid. All this is unsatisfied self seeking, which must be mediated into good form and faith.

The turning point often occurs when the student finally sees the plan for him, and submits. All along has been the unfelt *passive night of the spirit*, but now it predominates. The trials are no longer meaningless, but purposeful, and the student finally joins in and rapid progress may be made. Near the end, God takes command. The student has largely gone as far as he can. God proceeds to strip away the last remnants of self, for the purpose of divine union.

The passive night of the senses deals with spiritual advancement into Christ, while the passive night of the spirit seizes our now prepared virtues for the purpose of union into Christ, which is termed 'divinization'.

Read more at www.CatholicBooklets.in

The Divine union is the final stage of our existence within the body of Christ, and it is the final part of the passive night of the spirit. This is the wedding feast that Jesus spoke of. Miracles, prophecy, ecstatic contemplation are all common in the divine union. The Divine doctor himself conducts this soul transplant.

The divine union cannot fully take place in this life, and will be fulfilled only in the resurrection. The perfected saints who attained divine union with Christ, still experienced death, even after attaining spiritual union with Christ.

We might construct a three stage program, which we repeat until holy:

(1.) We identify and examine the problem and our foolish attachment to it. We do this in both structured meditation and on our feet as we encounter problems. We hold the imperfection or temptation at arm's length to break the emotional cycle which feeds itself. This emotional cycle usually proceeds away from perfection and towards self: pity, indulgence, destruction.

We recall our goal (incorporation into Christ) and our reasons. We compare our proposed action to the person Christ, and not only the first century Christ, but the present day Christ: the mother, the worker, the unemployed, the person at leisure, danger or trouble.

(2.) We ride out the peak and steamroll to virtue on the downside. We do not worry about the consequences, God will arrange those. We maintain focus on the only thing that lasts or has value, our participation in Christ. This is the "hump", which we must ride over, to the other side.

(3.) Cultivation of peace is the next (and necessary) event. We must not eliminate vice, pride and worry, only to complain of boredom. Our calling is to express ourselves as Christ in the many ways open to us. Boredom is disguised self seeking. Fulfillment, not self satisfaction must be our goal, and it is attained only with repeated practice.

Not just imperfections and sin, but legitimate actions also, should be given this program of scrutiny. A good act may be made better by it, and we advance as Christ.

The ten commandments are in order of importance. God comes first; separation from God only brings a corresponding separation from God's good design for our world. Praise of God implies an association of wills with God. Positive prayer joined to acts of selflessness advance our incorporation into God, and our families and the world benefit.

This document may be freely reproduced



Spiritual advancement is simply a deeper sharing in the life of God, who is Christ. We share in the very person of Christ; Christ is now all who constitute the body of Christ.

Personal spiritual advancement promotes social justice, and even salvation for others. We observe how original (and subsequent) sin introduced mistrust, greed, and hatred. These may be reformed by the mediation of spiritual advancement. When we suffer anger into patience, and greed into trust, individuals and nations are bettered, and the corruption is no longer suffered as personal or social disorder.

Our salvation is more than a regaining of the human perfection of Adam, it is an actual sharing in Christ; both the humanity and the divinity of Christ, (CCC 398, 789, 260, 460, 1988; 2Pet 1:4). This divine union with Jesus Christ was intended to be made in this life on earth. We may share in the divine nature of Christ, (CCC 398); but to do this we must deny our very selves (Mt 16:24). We shall see that not only must we deny our illegitimate actions, but our very selves. We cannot become Christ if we remain self.

The science of elimination of self is well developed; religious orders have for centuries molded their member's wills away from self, and toward God. These religious orders exist as practical aids to spiritual advancement, and their techniques may be used by anyone according to their circumstances. The seemingly pointless discipline they require has real results in mastering self will: uniforms, schedules, endless rules...there is little room for individual will. This selflessness becomes a habit, and over time, a character of the soul. The sacraments they have received act with fuller effect, drawing them closer to God as self is mortified.