

CONTROLLING OUR TEMPER

BY CATHERINE MORAN, OFS



One of the most dangerous faults today is the lack of charity and love concerning our outbursts of temper. This is seen everywhere — at home, at work and especially in our cars while driving. The news today is filled with people losing their tempers, resulting in violence and death. The consequences of a bad and uncontrolled temper open the door of hearts to every kind of evil. It destroys the virtue of charity, resulting in coldness, bitterness and discord among families, friends and neighbors. An uncontrolled temper dishonors all virtue. Such individuals are hard to please, are abrupt, thinking only of their own ideas and pleasures. Finally, an unmortified temper leads to all kinds of sins: jealousy, pride, slander and blasphemy.

Those who subjugate their tempers and tongues become persons of good disposition, endearing to those around them because they are kind, gentle, humble and ready to forgive. Their good temper can diffuse difficult situations. They also imitate Jesus and honor religion by becoming examples of peace, patience and love to everyone they meet.

What are the ways of correcting and controlling our tempers? First, we must seek out our defects either through a good friend, counselor, holy priest or spiritual adviser. We must acknowledge and accept our faults with humility, praying for guidance, help and the grace needed to correct our faults. It is a difficult, uphill day-to-day battle to conquer the quick temper and brusque tongue.

St. Francis de Sales had a hot and passionate temper, while St. Ignatius was quick-tempered and impatient. St. Vincent de Paul had a very disagreeable and austere nature, but he developed a gentle, peaceful and loving disposition years later. Those who knew him as a young man could hardly believe it was the same person they knew in his early years. These saints, and many others, conquered their defects and became the great saints we know today.

To obtain this goal, we need to examine ourselves every evening, reflecting on how we addressed people in our talk and actions.

“ SILENT LIPS ARE PURE GOLD AND BEAR WITNESS TO HOLINESS WITHIN. ”

(DIARY, 552) ST. FAUSTINA

It is recommended by spiritual writers, upon acknowledging our faults, to then impose a small penance or mortification upon ourselves to make reparation for them. It can be something as small as helping the poor by a donation, denying yourself a favorite food or dessert, or if possible, make a visit to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, humbly asking for His help and graces.

In a split second, our uncontrolled tongues can cause great harm to our souls and to those around us. It is important to first ask God every day for help in rising above our passionate nature. Second, we need to resolve never to speak, act or make a decision in a moment of anger. This is difficult to do, but with God's grace it is possible. Third, when you do speak, you must remember God hears everything you say, and when you die, you will have to give an account to Him of all your words, good or bad. Fourth, strive to never speak ill of your neighbor, except what is good and what you would only say to him or her face-to-face. Finally, always speak little and in a moderate tone, for speaking without thought and reflection is to speak without wisdom.

St. Faustina gives us excellent advice on controlling our temper through the value of silence: "The sword of silence will cut off everything that would like to cling to the soul. We are sensitive to words and quickly want to answer back, without taking any regard as to whether it is God's will that we should speak. A silent soul is strong; no adversities will harm it if it perseveres in silence. The silent soul is capable of attaining the closest union with God. It lives almost always under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God works in a silent soul without hindrance." (Diary, 477)

Silence relieves stress and cleanses our souls. Mother St. Teresa of Calcutta said, "The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, and the fruit of service is peace."

Our Lady shows us the way to inner peace and controlling our temper. By praying to Our Lady, the Mother of Silence, she will give you these 12 virtues: silence, listening, humility, joy, attention to others, patience, balance, docility, stability, purity, trust and mercy. The following is a prayer of consecration to Our Lady of Silence:

Consecration to Our Lady of Silence

O Virgin Mary, Mother of Silence,
I consecrate all of my life to you.
Deign to impress upon my heart
the Heart of your Son Jesus,
who died and rose again for me.
In reply to the angel's joyful annunciation,
you said, "Fiat"; at the wedding at Cana,
you taught me to do everything the Lord
tells me to do; under the cross, you gave me
an example of unity with Jesus, who was
obedient to the Father.

Our Lady of Silence, channel of grace,
give me each day the grace of sincere
conversion and of stability in my vocation.

Mary, dew of divine beauty, reveal how you
are a masterpiece of holiness, created at the
high price of the blood of Christ.

O Mary, cathedral of silence,
make this prayer resound in my heart:
"Be not afraid, because you are my child,
and you are loved by the heavenly Father."

Holy Mary, lifeboat of souls, bridge between
heaven and earth, guide me, together with
the angels and saints, to build the kingdom
of God on earth, so that I may live in the
constant presence of the Most Holy Trinity
and desire, for others and for myself, the eternal
peace and joy of the heavenly Jerusalem. Amen.

— Father Emiliano Antenucci †